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Looking for a building plot or renovation opportunity? Plotfinder.net is the UK's leading database of building plots. See page 77 for more, or visit the website

Visit the Shows

Homebuilding & Renovating and Home Improvement Shows provide an invaluable resource for self-builders and renovators. See homebuildingshow.co.uk for information

My Building Project

Get a detailed estimate of your building costs and find a reputable tradesperson in your area at mybuildingproject.co.uk

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HB&R HOMEBUILDING & RENOVATING

EDITORIAL

Content Director Michael Holmes
Editor Jason Orme
Content Editor Claire Lloyd
Associate Content Editor Natasha Brinsmead
Content Producer Daisy Jeffery
Content Producer (Digital) Lindsey Davis

EDITORIAL PRODUCTION

Content Production Editor Melanie Griffiths
Art Editor Billy Peel
Contributions by Emily Smith
and Karen Lawson

SUBSCRIPTIONS AND MARKETING

Head of Marketing Melanie Graham
01527 834039
Subscriptions Manager Alex Worthington
01527 834435
Interim Direct Marketing Manager Clare Elwell
01527 834493
Customer Services Jayne Everton
01527 834484
Marketing Assistant Kim Thomas
01527 834409
Partner Marketing Executive Helen Troth
01527 834402

ADVERTISING AND EXHIBITIONS SALES TEAMS

Group Advertising Director Gill Grimshaw
01527 834427 gill.grimshaw@centaur.co.uk
Classified Sales Executive Thomas Kerwin
01527 834492 thomas.kerwin@centaur.co.uk
Exhibitions Account Director Hellen Roche 01527
834418 hellen.roche@centaur.co.uk
Exhibitions Account Manager Josh Mortimer
01527 834497 josh.mortimer@centaur.co.uk
Client Partnership Director Chris Priestley
020 7970 4847 chris.priestley@centaur.co.uk

MAGAZINE AND WEB PRODUCTION

Head of Production Bill Griffiths
iPad & Print Production Manager
Charlotte Dearn
Online Production Manager Tom Burbridge
Email Production Assistant Sophie Everton
Production Admin Assistant Alice Sullivan

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Digital Sales Director Jackie Sanders
01527 834426 jackie.sanders@centaur.co.uk
Digital Sales Manager Lucinda Clarke
01527 834481 lucinda.clarke@centaur.co.uk
Digital Sales Executive Elena Gill
01527 834494 elena.gill@centaur.co.uk
Interim Digital Sales Executive Adam Connelly
01527 834494 adam.connelly@centaur.co.uk
Directory Sales Executive Simone Adams
01527 834494 simone.adams@centaur.co.uk
Head of Digital Gill Dawson
Web Services Manager Alison Nash
Web Services Technician Laura Sturgess
Social Media Editor Sarah Handley

PUBLISHING AND EXHIBITIONS MANAGEMENT

Joint Managing Directors
Peter Harris (Content and Marketing)
Nick Noble (Commercial)



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Sugar Brook Court
Aston Road
Bromsgrove
Worcestershire B60 3EX
01527 834400



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Looking Forward

JASON ORME IS THE EDITOR OF HOMEBUILDING & RENOVATING MAGAZINE

This month's issue contains what I consider to be the classic Homebuilding & Renovating mix. We have a comprehensive guide to choosing and installing stonework — in many ways the most beautiful, challenging and expensive of all the options for finishing your house (see more on page 68). Also, an in-depth guide to repairing and restoring ceilings in old homes (page 110), with bags of detailed advice on how to get the things right that previous owners of your home may well have got wrong.

Elsewhere, we're taking a look at one of the biggest emerging ideas in interiors — the use of timber on walls. Of course, timber panelling has been around for centuries, but an emerging number of owners of contemporary-style homes are incorporating timber as a way of adding texture and depth to their wall (and ceiling) coverings. It looks great, and we show you the best examples (on page 42).

Couple all that with project manager Bob Branscombe's guide to the best lessons for would-be project managers (page 83) and you have the ultimate mix of house design ideas and advice — what to build, and how to get it built.



Now for a word on next month, which sees a few changes to the magazine's look and content. Our April 2015 issue, out on sale on 26 February, will have a bright new appearance complete with — for the first time this century — a new logo. In the same way that houses need to be maintained and updated, magazines do too — we wanted to make sure we were continuing to give you, the biggest collection of readers of any home improvement or building magazine in the UK, the very best offering to assist you with your projects. So, it means more design ideas — with more guidance on how to implement them in your new scheme. It means more straight-talking expert advice, delivered in an easy-to-digest way, and I'm very excited for you all to see it, so make sure you keep an eye out.

A new logo, a new look. The same Homebuilding & Renovating — just more of it. Enjoy the issue. ■



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The same Homebuilding
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Homebuilding & Renovating is Britain's best-selling and most in-depth magazine for anyone building or renovating their own home. We aim to give you the confidence to take on your own project and provide you with the very best independent expert advice, design ideas for inclusion in your own home and the best examples from others who've already done it

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“Why is it Difficult to Reason with the Planners?”

Share your views on the magazine, your building experiences and more.
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FOUNDATION PROBLEMS

We are planning to add a 4.8x4m conservatory to our house and all of our quotes have come back specifying 1m foundations. We are on clay soil and there's a mature oak tree nearby with a Tree Preservation Order.

Fortunately the rear wall of the conservatory would be outside the 'root protection area', but the tree, coupled with the high volume change potential for the soil, would make 1m foundations inadequate.

Finding a foundation calculator online, I've inputted the data and the answer comes up as 'foundation depth in excess of 2.5m requiring structural foundation design'. I've also spoken to a structural engineer who has recommended 2.7m trench-filled foundations, but this depth seems excessive and potentially expensive.

I have tried to make contact with local Building Control and they haven't responded, but surely there also comes a depth (around 2.5m deep) beyond which it becomes impractical and dangerous to work?

Roy Werrett, via email



We welcome your opinions and take them into account when producing the magazine. We also want to hear about your project.

Email us at mailbag@homebuilding.co.uk or write to us at Mailbag, HB&R, 2 Sugar Brook Court, Aston Road, Bromsgrove B60 3EX.

Letter of the Month

DRY ROOF DILEMMA

We have been having problems with the roof over our extension: it was reroofed seven years ago but we keep getting leaks. The main roof was given a dry ridge system and has posed no problems at all. We've just had a roofing company here to do some repointing and to fit a dry ridge system to the extension. They supplied a Marley Eternit system but didn't end up fitting it as they maintain the pitch of the roof is too steep. Please can anybody suggest a company that does a dry ridge that will fit?

Margaret Craggs, via email



EXTENSION PLANS

We are planning to extend the kitchen in our terraced house both to the side and rear to create a space with a pitched roof that is the width of the house. This would be measured as 6m from the dining room wall, which would work out as being a 6m-long extension for the side return section, and approximately 3m for the rear section, and would effectively create a wide rectangular room.

I have spoken with our local planning department today and they have said that this wouldn't be possible because the rear section would be an extension that was greater than half the width of the house. I thought this rule only applied to the side section, which is only about 1.5m in width.

We know of someone in the area who has had this work done under Permitted Development (PD), with a

Certificate of Lawful Development. I also took an early draft of our plans to the planning department's drop-in session and they said there were no problems with the idea, subject to neighbours' agreement.

Is there a way that we can get our work done under PD? We've been told by the local planners that they have a much stricter criteria with planning applications and won't therefore approve it.

We've been presented with alternatives, however these look terrible. For example, they have suggested a 6m extension from the back kitchen wall which would, in effect, be a long narrow rectangle. Why is it so difficult to reason with the planners and to prove that our plans are more sympathetic and attractive?

Jaime Taylor, Hampshire

Digital Mailbag

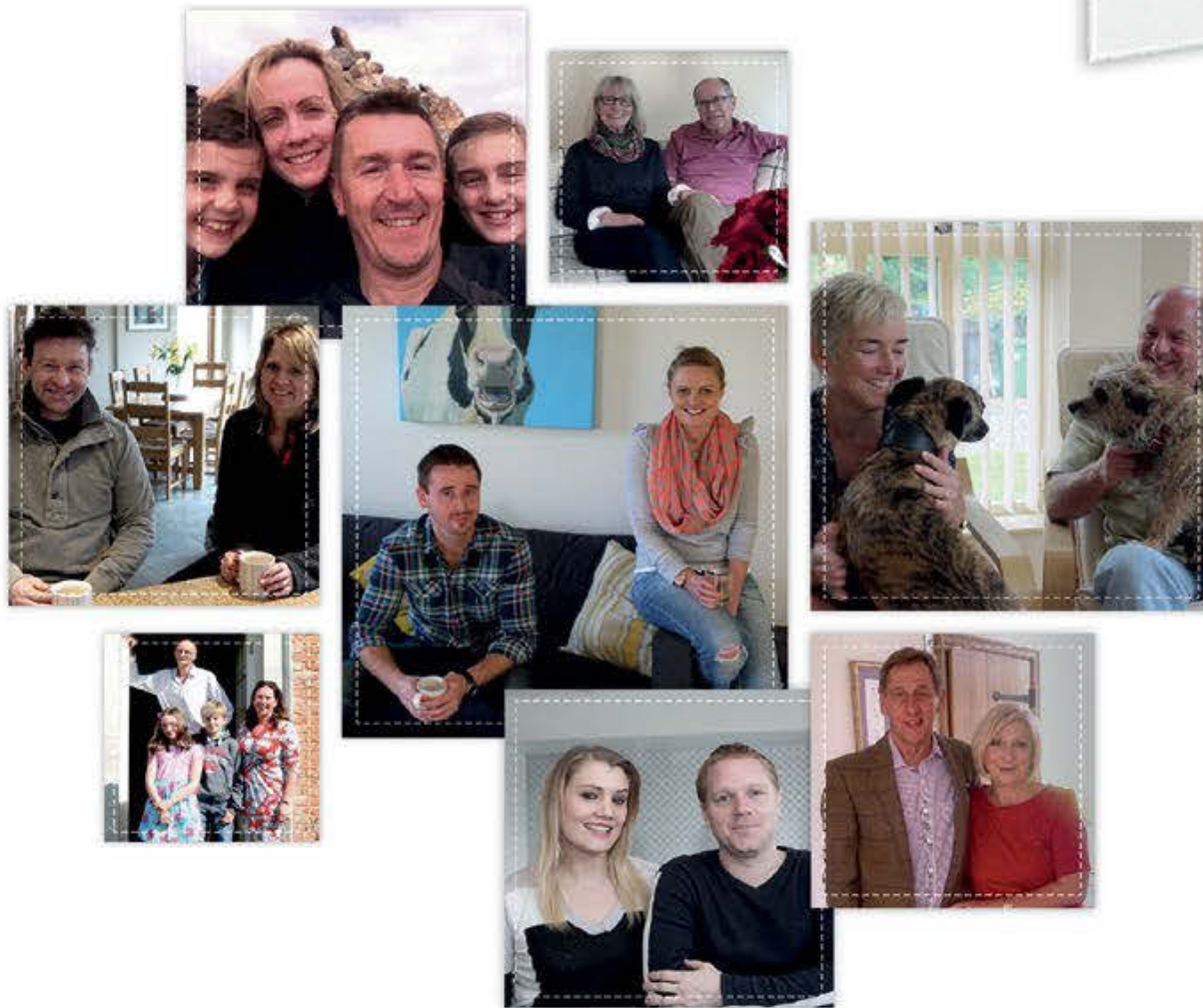
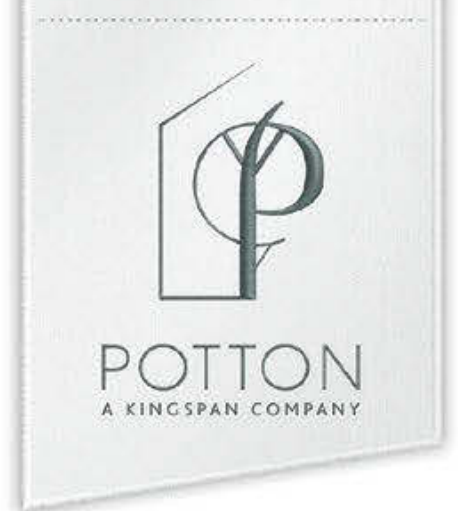


WHAT YOU'VE SAID ONLINE THIS MONTH

Following the announcement from Communities Secretary Eric Pickles that **self-builders will now be exempt from Section 106 payments**, our social media communities have breathed a large sigh of relief.

When asking how you felt about the announcement on Facebook, Christina Milward said: "**Genuine self-builders should have been exempt all along.**" While Becky Clutton also joined in with the celebrations, saying: "**This is excellent and long-awaited welcome news. We do however need more information about existing liabilities and the procedure for claiming exemption.**"

To join the discussions across our social media communities, or if you want to let us know how your project is going, visit homebuilding.co.uk/social-media.



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UPFRONT

Councils in Rebellion Over Section 106 Exemption

People building their own homes will no longer have to pay potentially £10,000s in local fees to get their project started. Jason Orme reports

Several local authorities are attempting to ignore the Government's recently announced exemption for self-builders from Section 106 Agreements, *Homebuilding & Renovating* has learned.

The exemption from paying Section 106 Agreements – which in many cases left self-builders with bills of £10,000s towards local infrastructure charges as a condition of gaining planning approval – was announced in November 2014 and issued formally to local authorities as part of updated planning circulars. The exemption threshold applies to any developments below 10 units, with a reduced threshold of five in rural areas, and some further caveats in designated locations.

In one case, a *Homebuilding & Renovating* reader contacted us to report that their local authority “will not be lowering their thresholds,” and are now stuck deciding whether to pay the Section 106 anyway or make a fresh application.

Another reader in the south

of England told us that her local authority's legal department contacted her after the announcement and insisted she still pay the Section 106 charge, stating that she enter into an agreement as part of a revised planning application, as they consider the Government's exemption announcement to be “just guidance.”

There's more — another reader tells us that their local authority are insisting on her paying a 106 despite the exemption “as she gained planning permission prior to April 2015.” In response, a Department for Communities and Local Government spokesperson told Radio 4's *You and Yours* programme on the subject – rather succinctly – “it's not just guidance.”

The National Custom and Self Build Association (NaCSBA) is coming up with advice for people in similar situations. “An option for those who have already entered into a Section 106 Agreement and have agreed to make a commuted contribution to fund infrastructure and or affordable housing as a plan-



ning obligation, is to reapply for planning,” says NaCSBA Chairman Michael Holmes. “This assumes they have not already commenced the project and triggered the payment. It would be very unusual for a local authority to refuse consent for a scheme they have only recently approved. The change to national planning policy guidance made on 28 November means that the new consent should not have a Section 106 Planning Contribution conditioned. If the local authority fail to comply with national planning policy guidance, the application could be taken to appeal.”

Local vs National

Several local authorities are planning to ignore Government guidance on the exemption of self-builders (and anyone building less than 10 homes) from paying Section 106 Agreements



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The Shipping Container as an Affordable Home

*Recycled shipping containers might not strike everyone as a prime building structure but, says **Lindsey Davis**, they offer a lot*

Plans have been submitted by Leicester-based architectural design and property management consultancy The Martin Design Partnership to build Leicester's first home constructed from shipping containers. With a total build cost of £170,000 (£85,000 on the build and £85,000 on land), the new home, built from eight shipping containers, is a creative yet unconventional solution to the lack of affordable housing in the UK.

The project will provide self-builder Christopher King, together with fiancé Sharna and three-year-old daughter Sadie, with a family home that far exceeds what they could afford on the open market. The two storey, three-bed detached property is to be built on an irregular-shaped pocket of land located only a mile from the heart of Leicester city centre. Similar-sized properties in the area can cost up to £100,000 more than the container self-build, and demand is extremely high.

Christopher King said: "We knew where we wanted to live and the sort of home we'd like to live in, however, after three property purchases fell through and we couldn't find anything else within our budget, we felt there must be another solution so started to look for a plot of land to build our own house instead.

"I had for several years been fascinated with the concept of building a home from shipping containers and had spent

months researching the building methodology, hoping that one day I would be able to put my knowledge into practice. It now seemed like the perfect solution for us to get on to the property ladder and we could achieve the look and feel of a mid-sized conventional home – albeit much larger than I could have hoped for – if I followed the lead of many intrepid self-builders and built a container home."

Scott Moore, Managing Partner of The Martin Design Partnership who designed the new home, commented: "Although designing and building a house from shipping containers is rather unconventional, there has been no compromise on amenities or utilities. In fact it will feature everything today's self-builder would expect for their new home, including high levels of insulation, timber cladding and solar panels, but built at a fraction of the cost of a traditionally constructed home.

"Using containers rather than bricks and mortar is surprisingly flexible and the ability to orientate what are, in essence, metal boxes to suit a challenging plot of land has been a major plus. With a build period of only six months we will see the city's first container home by in the end of this summer."

Prefabricated homes are certainly nothing new, but this ticks all the boxes of being affordable, quick to construct and an environmentally friendly way to repurpose old shipping containers. ►



What's In Store

Shipping containers are an affordable way of building a new home and provide several benefits – not least quick build times and flexibility of orientation

COURSE IDEAS

An Introduction to Lime and Lime Plastering (Brecon)

This two-day course is ideal for homeowners who want to understand how to repair old buildings, or perhaps build a new home using lime. Several dates are available throughout the year. Price: £210 (lime.org.uk/courses).

Stone Masonry (Shropshire)

A practical course teaching the use of tools, creating a template and shaping stone on Saturday 27 June and 19 September. Price: £80 (shropshire.gov.uk/acton-scott/courses-at-acton-scott).

Sash and Case Window Repairs (Fife)

Learn all about the repair of traditional

sash and casement windows on Saturday 14 March and 17 October. Price: £135 plus VAT (scotlime.org).

Timber Frame Self-build (Powys)

A residential course (fee covers full-board accommodation) covering a range of timber frame building techniques on 23–27 March; 28 Sept–2 October. Price: £375–£600 (courses.cat.org.uk).

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Four 'Barnhaus' homes will be built in South Wales — each costing just £41,000 to build



£41k Eco Self-builds Get the Nod

An innovative prototype for affordable green housing has been granted planning permission, writes Lindsey Davis

Here's proof that self-built homes can be both eco-friendly and impressively affordable. Funded by the Valleys to Coast housing association in South Wales, four prototype homes based on the 'Barnhaus' design — that won the 2013 National Custom & Self Build Association's 'Self Build on a Shoestring' competition — will be built near Bridgend. Designed by architect Ed Green (of Cardiff-based Pentan Partnership), the concept is a low-cost agricultural-style steel frame home. Not only is the home affordable at just £41,000 to build, but it will also be built in accordance with PassivHaus design principles.

Each home will be built using local suppliers and labour, and with the opportunity for tenant involvement — making each home a

self-build. Keen to adhere to an eco approach, the homes will test the use of straw bales (and other non-conventional materials) with advice on hand from sustainable building consultants from BRE Wales and Cardiff University. Post-construction evaluations will then be carried out to measure the homes' performance in use.

It is hoped that the homes will be a viable option for the delivery of social housing in Wales. As such, Barnhaus has been developed for both private and social housing, and Ed Green has said they had already been granted approval to use the design for a private self-build home in Aberdeenshire.

● Visit pentan.co.uk to find out more about Barnhaus

Last month we reported on the relaunch of the Government's **Green Deal Home Improvement Fund** after funds ran out less than two months after the initial launch last summer. Well — as we predicted — the new funding has almost run its course (as it turned out, the same week we went to press last month) and DECC (Department of Energy & Climate Change), who run the scheme, have stopped payouts for solid wall insulation. The less-lucrative '£1,000 for two measures' part of the scheme is still, as HB&R went to press, active. More funds are promised for 'early 2015.' Ahem.

FUEL CELL BOILERS

German boiler manufacturer Viessmann have just installed the UK's first mainstream fuel cell boiler, Vitovalor, in a home in Wolverhampton. This type of boiler, increasingly common in mainland Europe, produces heat as a by-product of electricity and can save homeowners £100s on their energy bills.

Comprising of a Panasonic fuel cell unit, a Viessmann peak load boiler (for use on only the coldest days of the year) and hot water tank, the system requires the same connections as a gas boiler.

The system is MCS-approved, meaning it has been rigorously tested to comply with industry standards and qualifies for Feed-in Tariff payments. Viessmann claim their Vitovalor generates around 4,500kWh of electricity each year.

● The Vitovalor costs around £20,000 (viessmann.co.uk)



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Showtime!

*The National Homebuilding & Renovating Show is just around the corner and it's better than ever, says **Lindsey Davis***

The event of the year for anyone building or improving their home is just around the corner. The National Homebuilding & Renovating Show, sponsored by Anglian, returns to the NEC, Birmingham, for four days – between 26-29 March – of the best home design ideas, independent expert advice, free seminars and the chance to track down the suppliers for your upcoming project.

Now in its 25th year, the Show is a must-visit for anyone looking to improve their home, or something more major — an extension, self-build or renovation project. With over 500 suppliers of the key products and services on hand to answer questions and the chance to look in person at and touch the products you'll be putting in your finished home, over the years visitors to the Show have created 1,000s of brilliant homes thanks to the help and ideas they have gained.

Highlights this year include the chance to see under the bonnet of a real stripped-back two storey timber frame show home (by Oakworths) to understand how homes are built; more experts than ever to talk to in our Advice Centre, combining



The Event of the Year

For full information on tickets and opening times visit homebuildingshow.co.uk

experts from *Homebuilding & Renovating*, architects and planners at the Planning Clinic; and of course, dozens of seminars and master-classes so you can pick up the latest on everything from heat pumps to new planning policies. ■

● See next month or visit homebuildingshow.co.uk for more

Homebuilding & Renovating Show
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Highlights

ADVICE CENTRE

Book free 15-minute consultations with experts from *Homebuilding & Renovating* magazine on our Ask the Experts stand. Be sure to bring along your plans and ask the team for some independent guidance on issues such as your design, heating or construction system, and more.

Likewise, the experts from Foxley Tagg Planning are on hand this year to give you free 15-minute sessions on your planning issues in the Planning Clinic.

If it's design advice you're after, why not book in with our Ask the Architects feature. Again, free 15-minute consultations specific to your project.

TOUR THE SHOW HOME
Oakworths' stripped-back timber frame home is a great way to see the workings of a self-built home. The perfect mix of design inspiration and practical advice, head for the show home early — it's likely to be hugely popular.

SEE, TOUCH, FEEL
You're going to be in your new home for a long time — so make sure you understand the products you'll be putting in it. There's no better place to see, touch and compare features like windows, doors, stoves, flooring and much more from your key suppliers.

Products

Ideas for February

Materials | Finishes | Launches



The RAN Tap by Treemme Rubinetterie

Made in Italy, the elegant RAN tap from Treemme Rubinetterie is made of brass and its minimalist appearance makes it perfect for any modern bathroom scheme. This tap is composed of a cylindrical body and its very slim flat surface has been cleverly designed to hide the aerator from view. The RAN tap is available in a chrome, black or white finish and is priced on application (POA). ● *Treemme Rubinetterie: rubinetterie3m.it*



Robeys Piazzetta Oslo Fireplace

The Oslo fireplace from Robeys, and developed by the Piazzetta design department, offers 360° views of the fire through curved glass, making it perfect for modern, open plan spaces. Featuring a cylindrical hood and majolica cladding, the structure is made of steel, has a nominal heat output of 14kW, and is available in 14 colours. POA.

● *Robeys: 01773 820940*



Cardok Mono

Offering the perfect solution to double your parking space and provide better security than a locked garage, the Mono from Cardok allows you to park your car underground thanks to a hydraulic pump which can hold up to 10 tonnes. The energy-efficient system takes only a few days to install and comes with a back-up generator in the event of a power cut. POA.

● *Cardok: cardok.com*



Heritage Kitchen by Mowlem & Co

The bespoke Heritage hand-painted oak kitchen by Mowlem & Co offers classical design reinterpreted for the 21st century and features a freestanding island unit fitted with Belgian Fossil marble worktops and a butcher's block/breakfast bar. The framed wall units comprise solid oak drawer boxes with dovetail joints, and the scheme also includes latch-style metal handles, a silver leaf splashback, and a range of appliances including a Westye range cooker, built-in Gaggenau fridge freezer and Quooker boiling water tap. Prices start from around £30,000. ● *Mowlem & Co: 020 7610 6626*

The Baked Tile Company's Courchevel Tiles

The Courchevel tiles from The Baked Tile Company's Wood collection feature a range of distressed wooden plank-effect porcelain tiles, available in a number of colours including Silver Blue, Mahogany Red, Bleached Oak, Arctic White and Silver Grey. The tiles can be used to create an eye-catching feature wall too. Practical and durable, the tiles are frostproof too, which makes them suitable for internal and external use. They're also easy to clean, so are perfect for use in busy areas of the home such as the kitchen. Priced at £55.20/m².

● *The Baked Tile Company: 02920 358409*





Natural Paving Products' Pavetuf Jointing Compound

The new Pavetuf Jointing Compound from Natural Paving Products requires no mixing and can be used in wet weather conditions, with the typical coverage of a 15kg tub being around 7m². Once cured, the compound is both weed and jet-wash resistant, and is also environmentally friendly and pet safe. POA.

● *Natural Paving Products:* naturalpaving.co.uk



The Options Range from Vitra

The aptly named Options range from Vitra offers all the components to create a beautiful bathroom with a range of sizes to suit all spaces. All of the pick and mix furniture can be specified in a choice of three finishes (Dark Cherry, Oak and Dark Oak) and the furniture is presented alongside 13 different individual countertop basins, from rectangular and double to deep and shallow round and oval bowls, all in different size options. There are also two wall-hung Option basins if furniture is not required, as well as wall-hung WCs and bidets. POA.

● *Vitra:* 01235 750990



The Heritage Window Company's Benenden™ Conservation Range

The new Benenden™ Conservation Range windows from The Heritage Window Company are an energy-efficient, slimline aluminium alternative to traditional steel, which do not compromise on the character of a building. They are made bespoke and covered in a tough powder-coated finish available in over 200 RAL colours. POA.

● *The Heritage Window Company:* 0800 731 4294

Wetrooms from Impey Showers

Impey Showers' range of wet-room products offer accessible solutions which can be fitted anywhere in the home. Thanks to its Impey Waterguard tanking membrane, the wetrooms benefit from a watertight barrier and come with a lifetime guarantee. The showering area is also protected by toughened safety glass treated with Aqua-Shield, and the glass screens are available in a range of sizes. Underfloor heating can also be specified to provide comfort underfoot. POA.

● *Impey Showers:* 01460 256080



Hybrid Boiler from Flow Energy

Flow Energy's new affordable hybrid boiler uses patented technology which allows the boiler to generate electricity as it uses gas to heat the home — and with the potential of being able to generate up to 40 per cent of the home's electricity, could save up to £200 off energy bills a year, while generating around £300 a year in Feed-in Tariff payments. POA.

● *Flow Energy:* flowenergy.uk.com



Geocel's Trade Mate Plumba Flue

The Plumba Flue from Geocel's Trade Mate range is a heavy-duty silicone sealant suitable for use on non-porous surfaces and ideal for sealing gas flues. Once cured, the sealant, which is available in black or red, is able to withstand short-term temperatures of up to 300°C and 250°C for long-term exposure. POA.

● *Geocel:* 01752 202060



J Rotherham's New York Fireplace

The New York fireplace from J Rotherham's Art Deco collection features a geometric, stacked linear design which epitomises Art Deco aesthetics and is hand-finished in a choice of British limestones: Portland, Creeton, Guiting, Ancaster and Bathstone. The fireplace is also coated in a stain repellent to prevent common household spills from damaging the limestone. POA.

● *J Rotherham:* 0845 388 1927

PROJECT PORTFOLIO

Take Inspiration from the Best New Individual Homes

SUBURBAN SUBLIME

Clever design sees an urban plot, 'landlocked' by neighbouring houses, become home to an award-winning contemporary new build

NEW BUILD | SURREY | SIZE: 319m² | COMPLETED: AUG 2013
ARCHITECT: SOUP ARCHITECTS
(020 7354 1729; SOUPARCHITECTS.COM)



The very best architectural gems are site specific, responding to the land upon which they sit and to the surrounding environment which they serve to enhance. This new home in urban Surrey, which was awarded the RIBA South East Award in 2014, is case in point — designed by SOUP Architects to meet a very particular set of challenges.

The plot of land began life as an unusually large garden to an Edwardian property, belonging to the clients' parents. "The enlightened clients spotted the potential here and approached us with a brief for a contemporary five-bed home," says architect Patrick Walls, co-founder and director of SOUP Architects, with whom the clients were familiar after the practice designed a new home for their friends. Carving out a building plot would bring the existing garden in line with those of neighbouring properties, with a shared driveway providing access to the landlocked plot.

Bordered on all sides by surrounding houses, including a new three storey development of flats to the east, overlooking was an issue SOUP Architects needed to address from the outset. Another was preserving both a mature tree line — including oak trees protected by TPOs (Tree Preservation Orders) — and the views from the existing house (RIGHT).



Designed Around the Plot

The open plan living/dining/kitchen space enjoys the best of the garden views thanks to a large picture window and a 6.5m expanse of sliding doors. Natural finishes such as rich walnut are, aesthetically, a warm counterpoint to the concrete floor. This same floor plays an important role, acting as a thermal store for the sun's heat entering the south and west-facing glazing, helping to regulate internal temperatures





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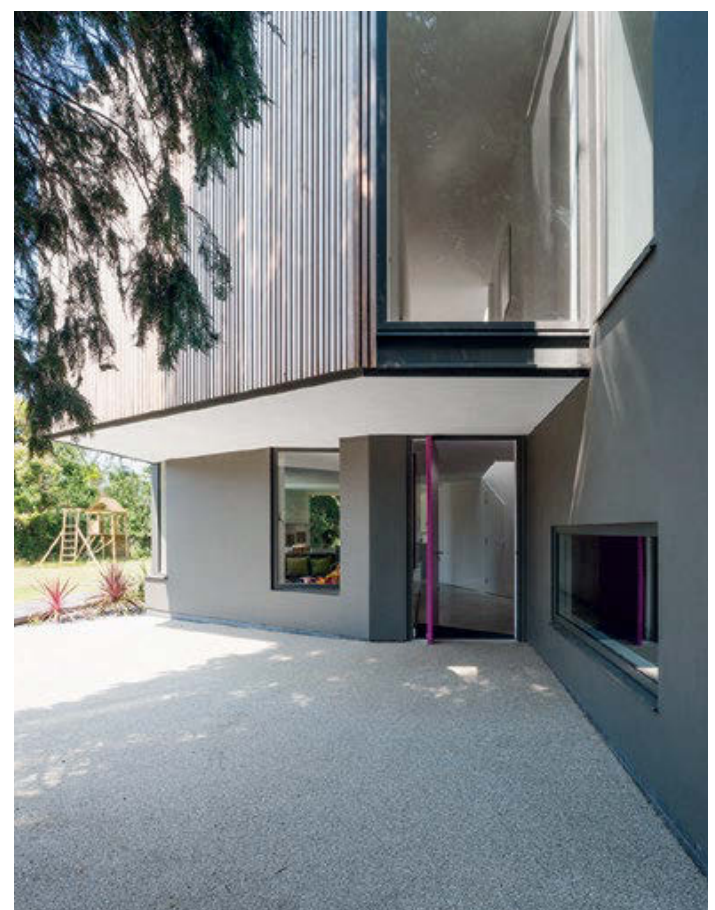
“The site influenced the design and orientation,” explains Patrick. “Tucking the new house into a triangular corner of the plot was an obvious place for reducing overlooking, and for allowing the main living spaces to be orientated south and west so as make the most of the afternoon and evening sun.” A spacious balcony and a cantilevered first floor above the main entrance on this front, west-facing elevation reduce the visual massing of this 319m² house. “Most of the volume is instead at the back, on the east-facing elevation,” adds Patrick.

Minimal windows openings on the rear elevation also ensure privacy for both the new dwelling and for the flats adjacent; triangular-shaped rooflights instead punctuate the flat roof, bringing in natural light from above. This side of the house is mainly given over to the ‘service’ areas too – including the bathrooms, utility and plant rooms – where light is at less of a premium as compared with the living spaces.

Having been granted planning permission at committee level in June 2010, the build finally went on site just over a year later, allowing for a substantial period of detailed project and cost planning – the latter undertaken by a quantity surveyor – and to ensuring a suitable contractor was hired for the task.

Massing

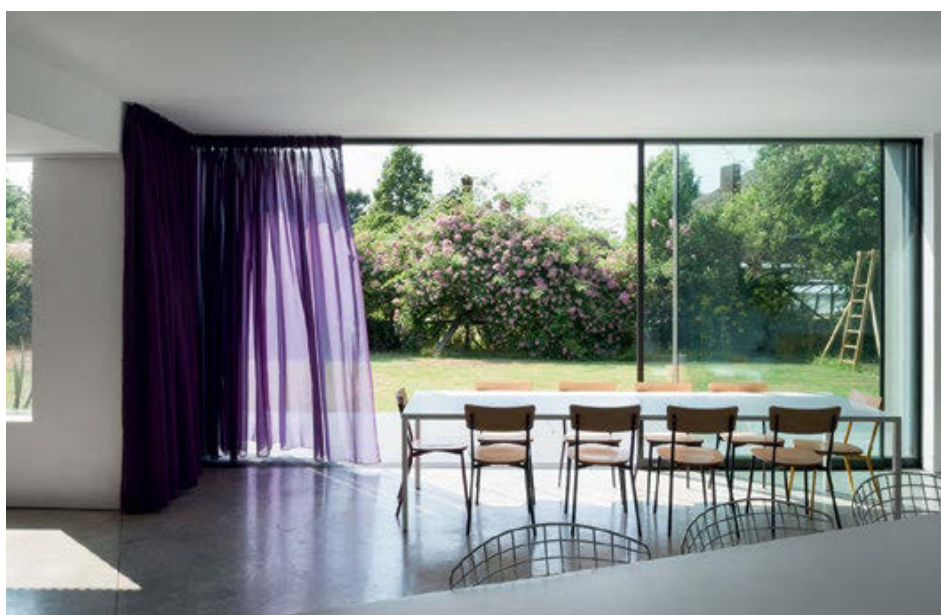
This new build appears much smaller than 319m² thanks to clever massing – an impressive balcony (leading off the first floor master bedroom) and a cantilevered first floor (which forms a sheltered entrance below, RIGHT) serve to break up this elevation. Grey render to the ground floor, and western red cedar to the first, also aid in reducing visual massing





Rear Elevation

The rear elevation (ABOVE), which faces a private road and a three storey flat development, features minimal windows. A large recess punctuates this elevation at first floor level, enabling a window opening to be introduced, without impeding on privacy



One key decision made during this period was the construction system: the house is built in steel frame with timber infill. “The clients did not want any internal columns and steel frame allows for large spans to be achieved,” explains Patrick. “The frame fits into a highly insulated 150mm timber frame infill system. This system also provided an efficient envelop.” (So efficient that a mechanical heat recovery system was specified. Rainwater harvesting and solar thermal panels complete the sustainable picture.)

Living next-door to relatives had some very clear benefits when it came to the build and the delivery of such materials. “When the steel frame was delivered, it was ‘decanted’ on the front drive and slowly brought to the plot via the shared access driveway,” explains Patrick.

Externally, the first floor has been clad in western red cedar, and appears to float above the subtle grey rendered ground floor. “The clients liked the idea of a timber-clad cantilever, having come to us with examples. (We always encourage examples and references.) However, to ensure the longevity of the cladding, we did not want to take it down to the ground floor. Plus, the different cladding treatments help to articulate the two volumes,” expresses Patrick.

The new dwelling’s connection to its garden plot is a highlight, with the open plan living/dining/kitchen space framing the greenery at every available opportunity; indeed, leafy branches captured by the cinema screen-sized picture window could easily fool one into thinking the house stood within the midst of the countryside, not suburban Surrey. But the crowning glory is the large set of triple-glazed doors, which can be slid into an aperture within the building envelope, creating an impressive 6.5m-wide opening.

Finally, with future flexibility in mind, the house embraces the Lifetime Homes standard, not to mention features a ground floor snug, which may double as a bedroom with en suite if future needs require. ■



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“Projects Always Take Longer Than You Think”

With the exterior finished, attention turns to the interiors, but progress on site becomes painstakingly slow for second-time self-builder Ash Theasby



ASH THEASBY

Ash Theasby has demolished a dilapidated industrial building in a Cornish Conservation Area. He is replacing it with a traditional cottage-style home

It's very deceptive. When the outside of a house is finished, it looks like most of the work is done — yet building projects always take longer than you think.

My self-build is right in the centre of a small village, and directly opposite the pub. As such, it's become a bit of a talking point. When I first started everyone was concerned by what was going to be built because it's in such a prominent position,

and it's in a Conservation Area. Thankfully, as things progressed on site, the house seems to have been universally approved by the village.

The only downside is that most people want a constant update on progress, especially when, from the outside, it looks as if the place is nearly finished. There have been so many who simply can not understand how it's taken so long for me to be able to move in — which I can understand, as to their eyes there has been no more progress from the outside alone.

So what has been achieved these last few months? Well, actually quite a great deal. Most of the landscaping has been done. The floor insulation, underfloor heating and floor screed has gone down. The first fix plumbing and electrics have gone in. The walls have been plastered in lime render. The whole house has been painted. The bathroom has been tiled. The kitchen and utility room units have been made (but not yet installed), and the boiler has been installed and connected.

What's left to do? Second fix electrics and plumbing; tiling of the stone floor downstairs; installation of the kitchen; the oak flooring



upstairs; skirting and architrave; and the last bits of landscaping. And then it's done!

So why has progress felt so slow on site? The main stumbling block was plastering the internal walls in lime — it took forever. I opted for lime because I wanted the cottage to have a traditional appearance, feel and texture, which I felt could only be achieved with lime.

Richie and Tom of Candy Plastering, who undertook the work, have done an excellent job; the rounded corners and window reveals, for example, really add character. But, with every first floor ceiling being vaulted, the job has been a bit of a nightmare — Richie and Tom were constantly putting scaffold towers up and down, moving them, and lugging their gear up and down. The oak beams and the vaulted ceilings are a real design feature that add an enormous amount of character to the place, but they have certainly added some challenges and unexpected costs of their own.

No matter how well you plan there is always something that sets things back a bit, be it availability of materials, availability of tradespeople, or human error, and there will inevitably be something that delays proceedings, unless you are very lucky indeed. ■

● Check out the latest with Ash's project online at homebuilding.co.uk/classof14

CLASS OF 2014

Each month we'll catch up with one of our four Class of 2014 projects: real self-builds and renovations as they happen. Follow them all, live, online at homebuilding.co.uk/classof14 — don't forget to send them your questions too! Meanwhile, meet the rest of the Class:



JOE SHIMBART

Joe is building an oak frame home on a triangular plot in Hampshire. He plans to incorporate a number of eco-friendly technologies and methods into his build



DARREN FINDLOW

Darren Findlow and his partner Anthony are first-time self-builders. They are building an energy-efficient oak frame house on a woodland plot in Cheshire



GILL MELLER

River Cottage head chef, Gill Meller, is renovating a summerhouse near Lyme Regis in Dorset. He hopes to turn it into the perfect sustainable home by the sea, with the help of his wife Alice



Exterior Façade

The rear of the house takes in the view through large expanses of glass, and the terrace and balcony are sheltered by projecting flat roofs



Looking Forward

With the aid of AR Design, Rob and Susie Eatwell have created a new home which embraces the best of their far-reaching views over the South Downs

SELF-BUILD | HAMPSHIRE | DEC 12 - FEB 14
SIZE: 200m² | PLOT COST: £490,000
BUILD COST: £410,00 (£2,050/m²) | VALUE: £1.5MILLION+





“A good architect will take your ideas and turn them into something even better than you could have imagined”

WORDS: **DEBBIE JEFFERY**

PHOTOGRAPHY: **MARTIN GARDNER C/O AR DESIGN**

When Susie and Rob Eatwell decided to build a new home, following the loss of their daughter, they wanted to immerse themselves in a project which would provide a positive focus and mark a fresh start for themselves and their family. It was vital, therefore, that the resulting house should offer a peaceful and relaxing retreat where they could spend time both reflecting and looking to the future.

The plot they found offered what seemed like the perfect solution, situated in a prominent location overlooking the city of Winchester, with far-reaching views over the South Downs. “We’d renovated houses before, but this time we decided to find our dream plot and build something new,” says Susie, who owns a beauty salon. “There was already a three-bed 1950s house on the site, but we almost didn’t bother to look inside because we knew from the start that we would replace it.”

Fortunately the couple did venture into the existing house though, because it was from the first floor bedrooms that they first realised just how extensive the impressive view was — such a sight would even go on to influence the reverse-level design of their new home.

“We moved into the old house for a while and lived there during the planning process,” says Rob, who works in the internet protection sector. “We’d heard good things about local architect Andy Ramus of AR Design, and decided to approach him for ideas. Despite standing in a street of traditional houses we knew that we wanted to build a contemporary, sculptural home that would take full advantage of the views.”

Not only did Andy Ramus want to design a house which would suit both the site and the Eatwells’ needs, he also undertook extensive research into the connection between architecture and health, determined to incorporate elements designed to improve wellbeing, such as natural light, air and views of nature. ▶



Living Room

The first floor living room opens onto a balcony through sliding glass doors. Underfloor heating has been laid throughout the house beneath grey ceramic tiles



SUSIE AND ROB'S SUPPLIERS

Architect AR Design Studio
.....01962 864545; ardesignstudio.co.uk
Building contractor Mike Jacobs (Builders) Ltd
.....mikejacobsbuilders.co.uk
SieMatic S3 kitchen The Myers Touch..... 01962 600182
Calabash pendant lights Lightyears.....lightyears.dk
Glazing HH Aluminium01489 589655
Sanitaryware Bathroom Warehouse.....01962 862554
Olive tree Just Limegrass Ltd.....07855 656984
Brick supplier Hoskins Brickhoskinsbrick.com





The resulting house is composed of four rectangular boxes topped with a flat, overhanging roof. Dark grey bricks, slim strips of cedar boarding and grey aluminium-framed windows further define the building. First floor reception rooms are arranged around a central open-air Zen garden which, together with extensive glazing and rooflights, allows natural light to permeate through the upper floor, accentuating the feeling of space. Located on the ground floor, the snug and four bedrooms are, by contrast, intentionally darker and cosier, with windows again framing views of the garden.

Initially plans for the new house were rejected as being too contemporary and too different from the neighbouring 1950s red-brick properties. Later, a virtually unanimous vote at committee saw the application approved, however. The building was even cited as a pioneer for good design in Winchester.

Rob and Susie moved out of the old house and lived in a flat nearby for the duration of the 13-month build, which was completed by local contractor Mike Jacobs. Once the 1950s house had been demolished and the plot cleared, the setting out could begin and excavation for the strip foundations then completed for the steel frame and blockwork structure, which has a single-ply

Street-Facing Elevation

The front of the house (LEFT) is clad in cedar boarding, with small windows designed to obscure the interior and provide privacy. Steps leading up to the entrance door are sheltered by a wall of rendered blockwork, pierced with vertical slots. To the rear of the property (ABOVE), meanwhile, a sheltered balcony can be used throughout the seasons

membrane roof. No major issues occurred during the project, although bad weather during the winter months did serve to delay progress at times.

Sample boards were made up to test the colour of the contemporary grey bricks against dark-coloured, recessed mortar joints, and met with the full approval of the Eatwells, who enjoyed visiting the site to watch the build progressing. The same industrial grey brickwork and cedar boarding have also been used internally to emphasise the indoor-outdoor feel of the house and to maintain a simple colour palette.

What's more, the courtyard garden, large balcony and covered patio are all designed to offer healthy outdoor living options regardless of the weather, and skylights have been positioned where the four rectangular boxes connect at first floor level. These ensure that the interior is constantly alive with light and shadow — providing a stimulating connection to the elements and bringing personality to the aptly named '4Views'.

"The light in the house is amazing, and choosing simple, monochrome finishes helps to emphasise the features as well as creating a really relaxing atmosphere," says Susie. "Every detail has been cleverly thought out and well made — it's a real pleasure to spend time here." ►

"Despite standing in a street of traditional houses we knew that we wanted to build a contemporary, sculptural home"



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THE INTERNAL GARDEN

At the heart of 4Views stands the first floor courtyard garden where a single olive tree grows. It's overlooked by the neighbouring kitchen, living room and dining room, each contained in separate rectangular blocks offset at rakish angles to one another, with the fourth box containing the entrance and staircase. In addition to being a beautiful focal point, this Zen garden serves a number of practical purposes — bringing light and air into the very centre of this new build house. “We were essentially given a free hand with the design, around a wish for a garden within,” says architect Andy Ramus.

The simple layout allows nature, natural light and fresh air to pervade the building, creating a connection with the outdoors which gives the house its feel-good factor. Fully glazed walls to the rear also take in far-reaching vistas of the South Downs. “The long views inspire Rob and Susie to look forward to the future, while the courtyard offers space for inward reflection,” says Andy. “It would be easy to just focus on the incredible outlook, but the courtyard brings the attention back into the house.”

The olive tree in the courtyard was chosen as a species which would thrive in this environment, and was planted in a large container in order to control the roots and prevent them from damaging the fabric of the building. Around this, the floor is finished with the same large-format grey ceramic tiles used elsewhere. ■



Contrasting Dark and Light

The internal ‘Zen’ courtyard brings natural light right into the heart of the first floor living spaces. While the bedrooms and bathrooms on the floor below have a darker, cosier feel, including the luxurious master en suite, where grey tiles sit alongside a feature wall of opulent gold tiles. A panel of obscured glazing (left of shot) filters natural light into the room, while lending privacy



What We've Learned

What surprised you most while undertaking this project?

We were surprised by just how much we enjoyed the whole project and how smoothly it ran. What could have been a daunting task turned out to be the best thing we've ever done.



What was your best buy?

The materials were probably the most important element, and were carefully chosen by our architect so that the inside and outside spaces seem to connect and flow together.

What are your favourite features of the house?

Obviously the courtyard garden is a favourite space, which impacts on the entire first floor, but every corner of the house has been cleverly designed to enjoy the views.

Were there any low points?

It was quite a slow build because we were working through the winter. By the end we were desperate to move in.

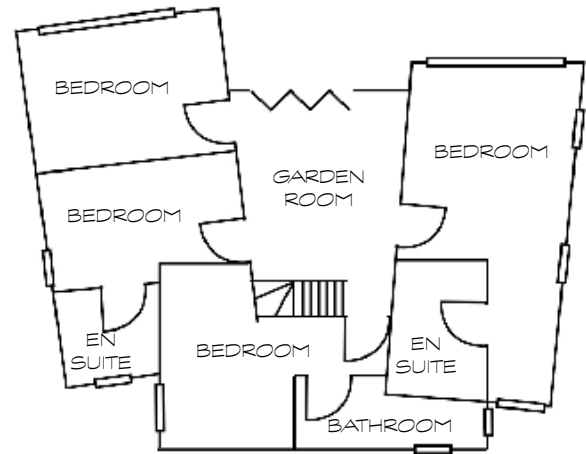
What advice would you pass on to others?

Trust your architect and allow them a fairly free hand, because you are paying for their expertise. A good architect will take your ideas and turn them into something even better than you could have imagined.

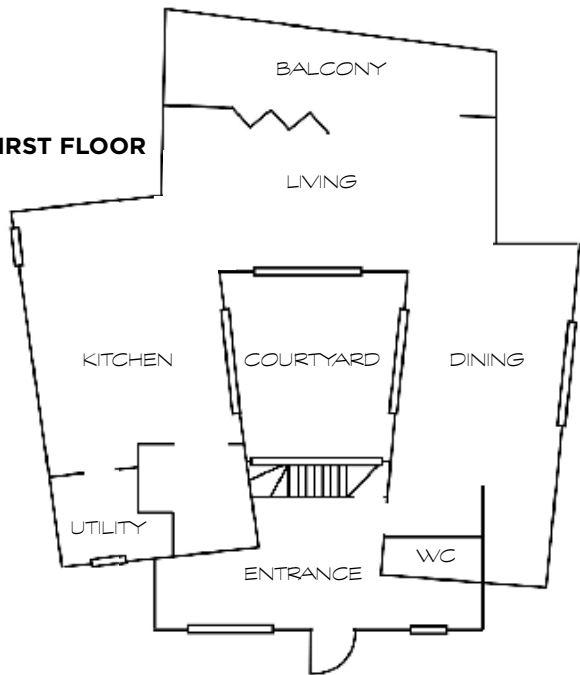
Floorplans

The reverse-level house has been designed to maximise views. Angling the first floor reception rooms around a central courtyard brings light and air into the house, too. The living room also features sliding doors, which can be peeled back to open this room up to a balcony. On the ground floor, there's four bedrooms (two en suite), a bathroom and a snug.

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Photographer, Martin Gardner
Project: Four Views, Winchester, Hampshire



Internal Timber Cladding

Wood panelling has been enjoying something of a comeback in recent years, although not always in its more traditional format, as **Natasha Brinsmead** explains

Introducing timber to your interiors is the ideal way to add warmth and a sense of homeliness, whether your overall aim is to create classic, traditional style or a more contemporary look. While timber floors have become something of a mainstay in many homes, with the majority of people now realising both the practical and aesthetical benefits they hold, for many, wood panelling remains something thought of as an original feature — you are either lucky enough to have it already, or you're not.

“Traditional wood panelling has been used in the UK for hundreds of years,” explains Jon Madeley, founder of The English Panelling Company. “Initially it was for wholly practical reasons — wood was the cheapest raw material around and it provided a strong wall covering with naturally inherent insulation properties. However, over the centuries, certain styles developed and fashion became the main driving force behind its continued use in domestic interiors. The Georgian and Victorian housebuilders produced some very intricate styles and this practice continued to develop until World War I and II — when Britain saw an end to the cheap and plentiful supply of timber.”

The great news for those looking to use timber panelling is that it is simple to install and to retrofit, is cost-effective and can be fitted on a DIY basis too. It is also easily adaptable — painted, stained, white-washed or left in its natural state.

There is not just one type of wood panelling: it actually comes in many different forms and can be bought off-the-shelf or custom made. ►



IMAGE: SIMON MAXWELL

A Style for All

LEFT: This Jacobean-style panelling from The English Panelling Company costs from £17 per panel (theenglishpanellingcompany.co.uk); ABOVE: This scheme from Hall + Bednarczyk Architects shows that contemporary homes also suit timber panelling

Timber Cladding

THE EVOLUTION OF TIMBER PANELLING

Over the years, the ways in which timber panelling is made has changed due to timber supply, demand for certain products and new technology.

“The simplest form of wood panelling and one of the first to be used on a large scale was ‘butt and bead’ jointed boards,” explains Jon Madeley from The English Panelling Company. “The design of the joint helped mask the movement of the timber as the tongue of one edge was free to slide in and out of the groove along its neighbouring board. Movement was not a big problem when materials like elm and oak were used, but in more recent times, the use of cheap knotty pine has meant that this type of boarding is prone to pronounced shrinkage.”

In the 1980s, when MDF became more widely used, things changed for timber panelling, as Jon Madeley explains: “Panelling made from thin sheets of MDF was not subject to the issues of shrinkage or warping and there are no knots to deal with. It is easy to cut and install, and relatively inexpensive. High-quality moisture resistant (MR) grades are now available making it suitable for use in kitchens and bathrooms. MR grade boards are also much easier to get a good paint finish on than standard MDF and it only costs a little bit more.”

TONGUE-AND-GROOVE

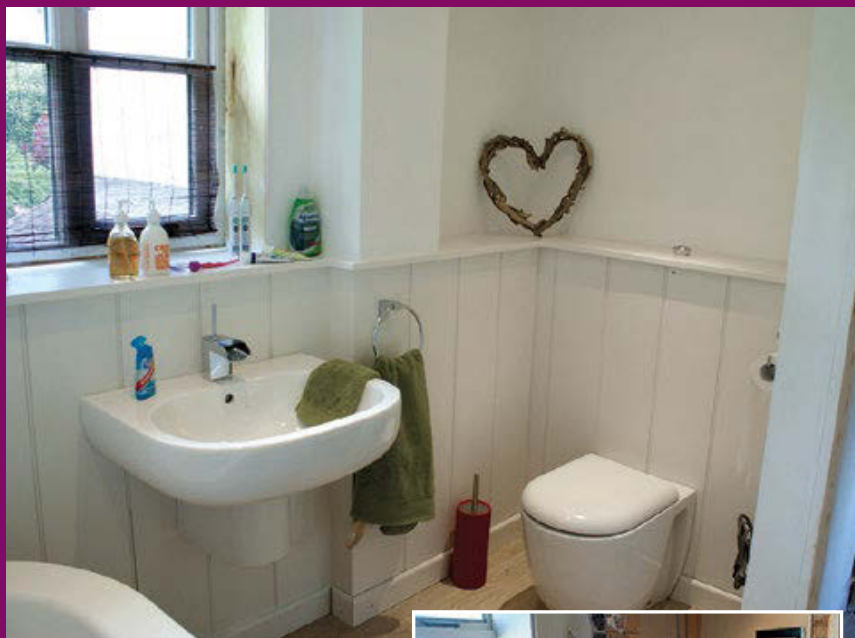
Perhaps the most commonly seen type of wood panelling, tongue-and-groove, is usually sold in packs and is designed to be fitted on a DIY basis, costing from £6/m². It is usually made of softwood planks.

There are also lots of tongue-and-groove look-a-like products on the market made from either timber or MDF. These have the appearance of panels that have been clicked together but actually come as continuous sheets, making them quicker and less fiddly to fit. They come ready to be primed and painted.

PERIOD STYLE

There are various styles of wood panelling out there, from those labelled ‘Georgian’ and ‘Victorian’ to sleeker, more modern designs. Most can be

HOW IT'S DONE



Panelling can be fixed directly to the walls, or in cases where the walls are in a bad state of repair and where pipework needs concealing, fixed directly to battens or plasterboard using adhesive and nails. It can also provide the opportunity for a handy shelf.



This example is from The English Panelling Company and costs from £10.75 per sheet.



Painted wall panelling here adds warmth and a period feel to this renovation



found in either MDF, MDF with a real wood veneer, or as solid timber.

When it comes to determining a style to suit your home, Paul Gamble of The Wall Panelling Company says: “Try to be true to the property and you will be OK. Arts and Craft-style homes will be more in line with a plain Shaker-style panel, and a Victorian property will be more in keeping with something like our Heritage range. Listed buildings will usually require oak panelling. Panelling can also be very effective in contemporary homes, giving a touch of old meets new, or by using plain wood veneers.”

MDF panelling is designed to be painted, while hardwood panelling such as oak can be varnished or left as it is for a more natural look. If you are considering softwood, it will need to be treated with a primer and painted if you don't want issues

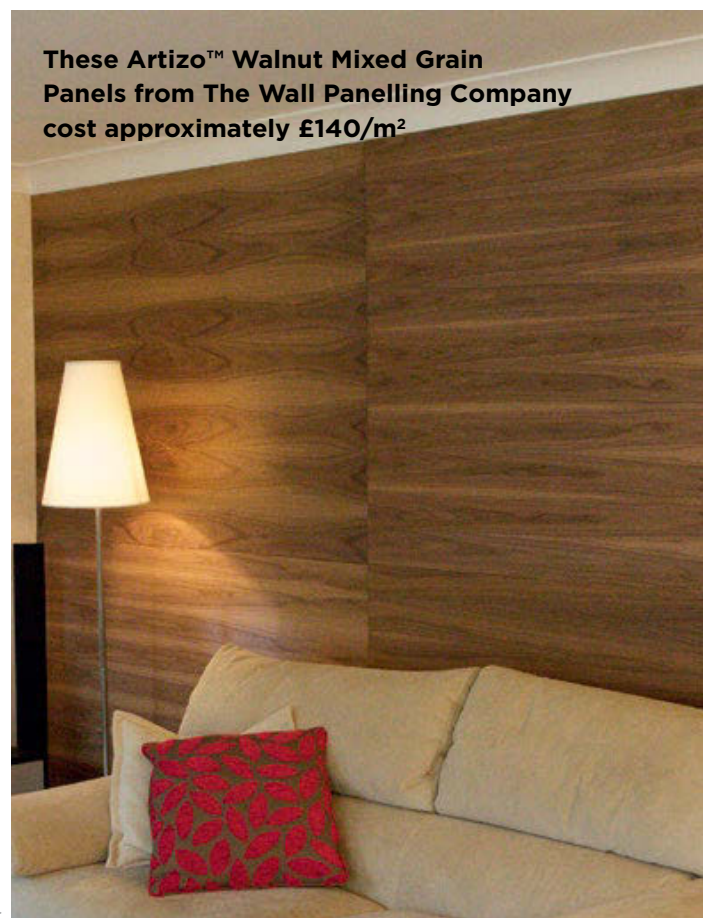
with movement — particularly in bathrooms and kitchens.

There is also the option for ‘open-backed’ panelling. This produces a square or rectangular panel design using sheets of MDF with the squares cut out — these panels are then glued directly to any flat surface and painted. “Once painted, the MDF and your wall read as one and the room is transformed,” says Jon Madeley. “The process is extremely quick and requires only basic DIY skills. This enables a traditionally panelled look at a fraction of the cost of using timber.”

A CONTEMPORARY TWIST

Of course it is not just traditional-style homes that can benefit from the character and warmth that wood panelling brings — there are some very modern takes on this look worth considering too.

These Artizo™ Walnut Mixed Grain Panels from The Wall Panelling Company cost approximately £140/m²



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Laser-cut wood panels look particularly striking and can be customised to whatever pattern you have in mind, before being glued to the wall and either stained or painted.

Using pre-cut, stained square panels arranged to sit together over one entire wall in either real, veneer or look-a-like walnut, maple or cherry also looks stunning, as will very uniform planks stacked horizontally either over an entire wall or cladding a breakfast bar, bath or staircase.

FITTING

If you already have smooth, dry walls, then some panelling (particularly that made from MDF) can be glued directly to the wall using an adhesive such as No More Nails from UniBond, or similar.

If, on the other hand, your walls are in a dire state of repair (and perhaps the very reason you are considering wood panelling in the first place) then a different approach will be required. Fix battens to the walls and then either fix your panels directly to these or fit plasterboard and then fix to this.

If you are aiming to conceal pipework or wiring behind your panelling then you will need to go down the battening route, creating studwork using timber measuring at least 50x50mm and ensuring that all the edges of the panels are fully supported. Remember that if you are concealing services behind the panelling, an access panel will be required, so rather than using adhesive, use screws over one section.

Skirting or dado rails are best added once the panelling has been fitted, although some skirting has a flat edge on top that the panelling can sit on. However, in most cases the skirting should be fitted afterwards, over the panelling.

If you are only using panelling halfway up the wall then a dado rail will not only finish it off nicely (as

Ceilings

Conjuring up thoughts of Alpine chalets, panelling can be fixed to ceilings in the same way as it is to walls and suits both modern and traditional homes alike, as this project from McInnes Gardner Architects goes to show



A New England Feel

ABOVE: This Georgian panelling is from The English Panelling Company and costs £16.50 per panel; RIGHT: Panelling is also a unique design idea in awkwardly shaped rooms as shown here

ABOVE), but will also be useful in visually straightening up any uneven sections, before gaps are filled. In the case of tongue-and-groove boards, they are usually nailed (a nail gun comes in useful here) into place.

“Hallways and stair panelling should be one-metre high from the finished floor — this will mean the dado will fall just above or in line with the handrail on the stairs,” explains Paul Gamble from The Wall Panelling Company. Anything else could cause a problem when the panelling meets the bottom of the stairs as the panels will look too small or far too high once fitted on an angle.” ■



USEFUL CONTACTS

The English Panelling Company 01453 731305; theenglishpanellingcompany.co.uk
The Wall Panelling Company 0845 434 6030; thewallpanellingcompany.co.uk
Wickes wickes.co.uk
Panel Master 01706 260070
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Home Truths

Charlie Luxton

SELF-BUILD THE SAVIOUR

Ever wondered what a society where most homes are self-built might look like? In the final part of his series, **Charlie Luxton** shares his vision and explains why it could, and should, revolutionise our whole attitude towards where we live



Charlie Luxton

Combining television and designing since graduating from the Royal College of Art in 2000, where he specialised in sustainable residential design, Charlie is director of four-person practice Charlie Luxton Design. He has made programmes about architecture for the main broadcasters in the UK and is currently presenting 'Building the Dream' on More4

In this country we are facing a housing crisis, with the number of houses built a year estimated at about 100,000-150,000 too few, and this has been the case for decades. Too few houses is pushing up prices and creating an almost generational exclusion from house ownership. We also have a crisis in the quality of new houses. A recent survey by NaCSBA (National Custom & Self Build Association) and RIBA (Royal Institute of British Architects) stated that 74% of us would not buy a house built in the last 10 years. In a society that defines itself by new things – phones, clothes, cars – the fact that so few of us want a new house is a crushing indictment of the state of our housing industry.

Step in self-builders, whom I believe can help save Britain from this crisis. However, at present, only 10-12% of homes are self-built in the UK – only 5% in England – whereas the European average is approximately 50% — that's 10 times more.

In this mutant housing system of ours, eight large developers build around 60% of our new homes. In the 1980s this figure was 40%. The



IMAGES: SHUTTERSTOCK; JOHN PERRY

power and wealth generated by building homes has been focused into fewer and fewer hands, and a consolidation which is bad for competition, quality and quantity.

One of the key issues is the collective failure of a planning system which is meant to represent what we as a society want, and since at least the 1960s, there has been a growing opposition to building/development. This anti-build rhetoric was embraced by almost all but with consequences foreseen by few.

Perhaps one of the most damaging of these consequences has been a transition of planning departments from proactively 'planning' development to being almost solely focused on development control. The idea that we could somehow stop new housing on greenfield sites, especially with a growing, changing population, now looks naïve. However, decades of planning policies have tried to do just that, making it harder to obtain land zoned for development to the point where fewer new homes are being built despite soaring demand. It now seems that across most of the country the only way to get planning permission for



a new house on a greenfield site is to be a huge company with an army of well-paid lawyers who can out-manoeuvre fund-ravaged planning departments.

Another unexpected consequence of focusing so much new build into a few companies is a strangulation of the building technologies sector. We live in a country of 64million with a proud heritage of invention and manufacturing, but bar a few notable exceptions nearly all the good new low-energy building technology comes from the continent. Interestingly a disproportionate amount of it comes from Austria, a country with a population of 8.4million but a self-build rate of 80-90% — coincidence?

The eight big developers responsible for so much of our new housing are risk adverse when it comes to new technology. When they are battling with a volatile housing market and the challenges of the planning system they're not interested in the risk of using innovative technologies

with all the potential liability that brings. Self-builders on the other hand are risk takers and love trying new technology and ideas, but with so few of them, many new innovations and technologies wither on the vine and force us to look abroad for the best and latest ideas.

I have spent quite some time trying to work out why we have become so anti-building. There is now so little benefit for communities where new homebuilding occurs, it is no wonder few of us want it. Congestion, road closures, slower broadband speed, stretched health and education services, the list goes on.

Now with the 'big eight', most of the building work is done by large-scale contractors to match the size of the developers and, beyond the million an acre given to the landowner, the rest of the money disappears down the motorway with the army of white vans at the end of a day's work. What's more, the big housebuilders generate around

The Two Sides of Housing

Representing how self-built houses can offer individual, beautiful homes to the local area, this home (ABOVE) offers its owners better quality of life thanks to its larger rooms, well-crafted features, and to its energy-efficient solutions which also provide low running costs. Compare this with the mass-produced housing estate (LEFT) which, while serving the purpose of cheap-to-build housing, suffers from cramped accommodation and fails to offer kerb appeal



double the profits of their European counterparts. This money is not used to make better homes or spent in the locations where the houses are built; it goes to the shareholders, pension funds and company owners making the wealthy, wealthier.

The balance has tipped beyond being an equitable transaction to being totally one-sided, and the result is that very few people want large-scale housebuilding anywhere near them. This may sound far-fetched. Are we really weighing the pros and cons to draw complex conclusions about fairness and housebuilding? Quite possibly, yes.

If the efficiency and scale of the 'big eight' is a fundamental problem to the acceptance of local development, as I suspect it is, then self-build could be the antidote.

build however can reintroduce this additive development and I believe result in better place-making.

Changing a piece of land from agricultural to residential increases its value by around 100 times. Given that the average self-builder spends more per plot than the big developers, we don't need a Marxist collectivisation of building land to make a self-build revolution happen, just a few tweaks to the planning process.

If more people gained from the positive financial effects of decentralised housebuilding then resistance to new housing (NIMBY-ism by another name) would reduce. If new houses in your local area meant more money invested in the local economy, with the wealth it creates shared more evenly, then more people would support it.

“The balance has tipped to being totally one-sided and the result is that very few people want large-scale housebuilding anywhere near them”

Self-builders are inherently more inefficient than developers due to a lack of economies of scale and experience, however self-built homes are bigger and more sustainable — no surprise because if you're building your own home you want to make sure it's bigger, better and with smaller bills. If you also consider that the average person moves every seven years, and the average self-builder every 20, they invest not only financially but emotionally into the local community.

Many of our most beautiful villages and towns were built one house at a time, an additive process that has resulted in a rich variation of style and scale. Quite how we think we can ever maintain or recreate this effect by getting a few housebuilders to drop big blocks of homes from the drawing board of a second-rate designer I will never know. Self-

I have no doubt that new housing will always be divisive, but the pill would be significantly sweeter if it created and sustained more local jobs and businesses. People are incredibly rational, and if housebuilding spread wealth right through the economy rather than focusing it at the very top, more would embrace it. And by God we need a lot more people to embrace it because we now have a cross-party political consensus to build a lot more houses.

We have entered a 'how big is my building target' competition in the run up to May's election and 250,000 a year seems the kind of level it will be, but how are we going to achieve this? Will it be through a 'business as usual' approach by getting the big developers to build more tiny houses that most of us don't want? I worry that it may and in doing so, reward the big developers



The Big Fear

Showcasing the complete opposite of what Charlie envisions for the future of housing in the UK, the above development is case in point of the type of identical, tiny and mass-produced new houses by large-scale developers — which lack individuality and character, not to mention offer inadequate living spaces

despite their failure to deliver the quality housing that we deserve.

A big part of this building boom is to help drive growth in the economy, however it's more likely to create poor-quality houses, debt, and fail to capitalise on its potential to stimulate the economy. I believe self-build can save us from this.

I may sound like a dreamer, an idealist; how could self-builders possibly build enough houses? Surely you need established housebuilders to create well-planned housing?

For better or worse, Margaret Thatcher stoked the capitalist in all of us and created a nation of homeowners. Now, George Osborne and his friends have the potential to make us a nation of housebuilders and in doing so shake up the inward-looking, greedy housebuilding sector and save us from another botched political scheme. ■



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Into the Woods

From a 1960s bungalow to a modern family home on a woodland site, Will Lasdun's latest renovation project is nothing short of remarkable

RENOVATION AND EXTENSION | DEVON | NOV 09 - JUN 14 | SIZE: 400m²
HOUSE COST: £503,000 | BUILD COST: £233,000 (£582/m²) | VALUE: £850,000

WORDS: KAREN DARLOW | PHOTOGRAPHY: RICHARD DOWNER



Exterior Façade

In an idyllic woodland setting, this one-and-a-half storey home has been painstakingly adapted from an existing bungalow, with many of the original materials finding a new life in this latest reincarnation. The old roof purlins, for example, have been used to build the magnificent gable end, while the stonework has been refreshed next to the new cedar cladding and grey render





Not known for rushing in before they've carefully considered all the pros and cons, Will Lasdun and his partner Lisa Class nevertheless didn't think twice before buying their property near Torbryan, Devon — deciding to buy it on the approach lane, before even reaching the existing three bedroom 1960s bungalow that sat on the woodland site, with views looking out over the fields towards the English Riviera. "It was hidden away down this narrow tree-lined track," explains Will, "and I just thought whatever is at the end of this lane, we can make it good."

Will, who has a background in sculpture and runs his own building design business, had no difficulty reimagining the bungalow as the perfect family home. With their son Blaise, 11, the couple had been living in their self-built home in Totnes, which Will built back in 2005, and had reached the stage where a garden to play in and space to entertain friends were increasingly important.

The couple moved into the bungalow in November 2009 and started to think about what to do with it. "It was a fairly standard, not especially attractive 1960s bungalow and, in that sense, we were lucky because the

"I thought whatever is at the end of this lane we can make it good"

planners weren't too concerned about it — other than the fact that we were right next to a Grade II listed manor house," explains Will. "But as we chewed over the design, we had to do our sums and decide whether to knock the bungalow down and build from scratch VAT-free, or to somehow adapt and incorporate the original building in our plans."

Those were by no means the only considerations though: one major factor was that the very same idyllic country track that had first won them over was simply too narrow for big delivery lorries. "A 400-year-old oak tree overhangs the track, so there were height restrictions too," says Will, "and the cost of demolishing the bungalow and removing 60 loads of rubble on smaller trucks and pick-ups would have amounted to around £20,000. Plus, we needed to live somewhere while we were building and we couldn't even get a caravan down the track. In any case, it seemed a huge waste to throw away a building with potential." ►



With the need to live in the property during the build, the decision was made to keep all four external walls of the bungalow, but to radically change its internal structure and replace the roof to give extra height. The new design would also see the demolition of the old garage with a replacement new building joined to the bungalow via a glazed link. This new garage provides bedroom space above, along with a west-facing studio for Lisa, an artist, and a workshop and office for Will.

Initially, Will submitted plans for pre-approval for two storeys for each part of the new house, incorporating a curved, barrel-vaulted roof. "There were plenty of farm buildings in the area with similar rooflines, so I thought it would blend in well, but the planners weren't crazy about that next to a listed building, so I had to rethink it," he says. "Actually, curves introduce extra costs, so I wasn't overly worried, and our revised plans for steepening the pitch of the roof to give us one and a half storeys, along with the bedroom/studio, were passed."

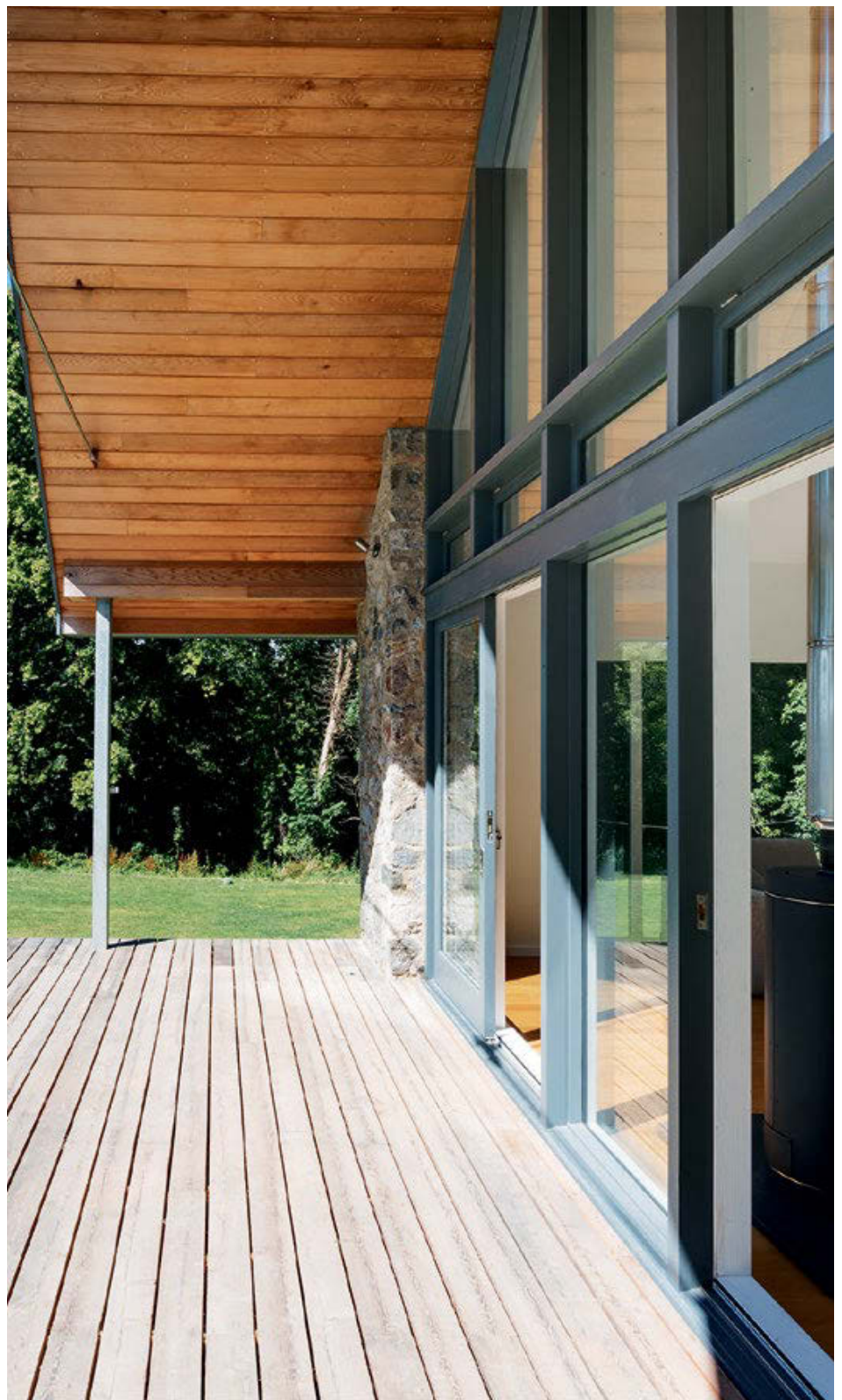
Will started work on the house in November 2009. Little by little the building materials were brought down the lane on the back of his Land Rover pick-up and, just as he had done for the family's first home in Totnes, he took on the entire build himself, calling on a joiner, carpenter, plumber and electrician for specialist help whenever he needed it. The family lived in the main bungalow as Will demolished the garage and built





Transformed

Hardly recognisable from its old self, the new home includes a new timber framed bedroom and studio section above a double garage (ABOVE), where the original garage once stood — accessed via a hallway link. A cantilevered awning (RIGHT) shelters part of the south-west facing decked area





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Light-filled Interiors

The kitchen/dining/living area enjoys views over the garden and beyond through the double-height window. The contemporary-style Saey Linus woodburning stove helps to warm this space; as does the underfloor heating



the new garage and timber framed bedroom/studio/workshop area above. Once that stage of the build was complete, the family moved into this while work began on the main bungalow, with Will removing the roof and stripping out the interior walls.

“It made sense to radically rework the layout of the bungalow because the first thing that struck us when we looked round was that the master bedroom was monopolising all the best views, overlooking the fields towards the coast,” says Will. “We wanted to put our main open plan living space there, together with a huge double-height window and outdoor decking for entertaining.”

Thanks to Will’s reworked layout, the new open plan kitchen/dining/living space acts as the heart of the home, with the large expanses of glazing allowing the family to make the most of the views. The kitchen was built to Will’s design by joiner Robin, who used a combination of HDF for the cabinets – sprayed in two-pack lacquer – and stainless steel worktops from GEC Anderson in Tring. Opposite the kitchen, and filling a vast expanse of wall, is a fitted open shelving unit, again designed by Will to house all of the family’s treasures.

Adding height to the roof to create a mezzanine had another advantage too, as Will explains: “The old roof was quite low and the gable end of the house looked squat and out of proportion. But now with the extra height and all the glass, the living area tracks the sun

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“It made sense to radically rework the layout of the bungalow”

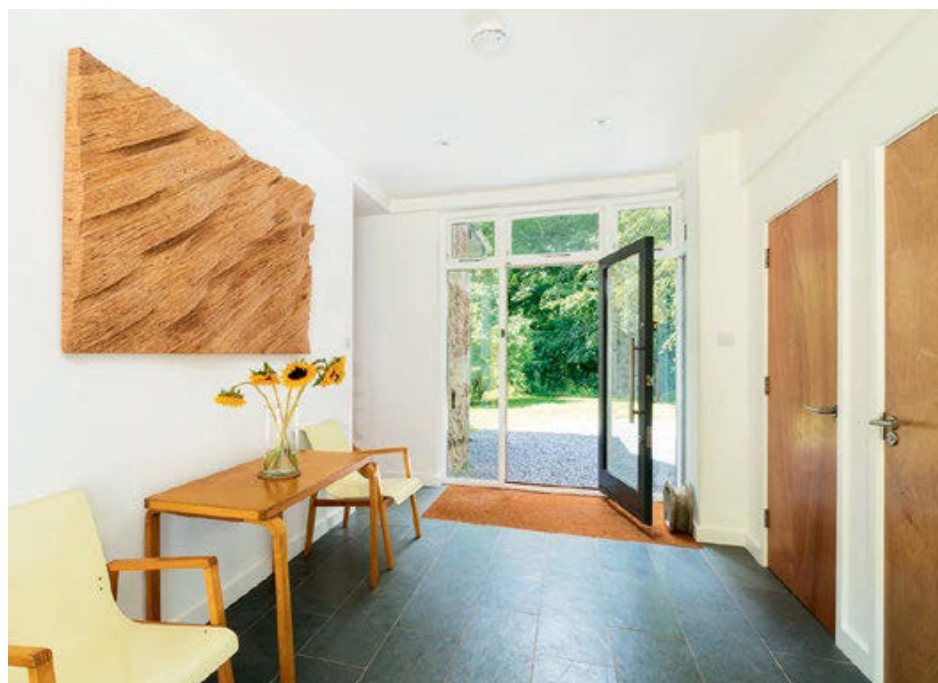
round and, with added Velux windows in the roof, the house is full of natural daylight all day long.”

Mindful of costs, the logistics of getting new materials on to the site, and keen to reuse as much as possible, Will made sure nothing went to waste. The stone sections of the bungalow for instance are original, but now look very different next to the western red cedar cladding and smart grey render, and the wall around the deck has been built using stones from where the previous windows were taken out. The gable end itself was also constructed with the old timber purlins from the roof. “Robin the joiner did an amazing job and machined it all in two halves,” says Will. “We also had a brilliant carpenter, Ian, who helped me every Saturday and my good friend Hugh helped me install the windows, staircases, doors and main south gable frame.”

Given the coastal location, consideration had to be given to the stability of the products, and so two big sliding doors leading out to the garden were chosen over bi-fold doors in the main open plan living area. “We’re very exposed to southwesterly storms here,” says Will, “and from previous properties, I knew you had to be careful with the weather. It turned out to be a good decision.” Equally essential – although they look unobtrusive – two galvanised steel posts at the end of the gable were installed to provide stability for the cantilevered section, as they connect to the steels in the roof. “They’re actually working quite hard to hold the building down, as it’s a real wind trap,” explains Will. “Getting the half tonne steels in situ was interesting too. We had a friend with a telescopic forklift tractor to help us manoeuvre them.”

It seems wind power might have been the most fitting solution on such an exposed and windy site, but instead the house has oil-fired central heating, with underfloor heating supplied by Maincor. Plumbing has also been installed for solar panels which Will will eventually fit on the roof. A 130mm-wide engineered oak floor from The Natural Wood Floor Co. has been placed on top of the original timber floor for added insulation and, just in front of the big windows on a 40mm-thick slate hearth, sits a Saey Linus woodburning stove which acts as the main focal point of the room — it throws out enough heat to warm the rooms in the mezzanine above. In fact, a round interior window overlooking the living room can be opened to allow heat from downstairs to circulate and heat the upper level.

From the carefully considered spaces to the detailed elements such as the shelving, every aspect of this house has been planned to perfection. And true to the promise he made before he reached the end of the lane, Will most certainly has made it good. ■



New Spaces

A spacious open plan family living area (TOP) includes kitchen cabinets, designed by Will, with stainless steel worktops from GEC Anderson. While a hallway (ABOVE) links the new timber frame section with the rebuilt older part of the house

The Lowdown

WILL AND LISA'S SELECTIVE COST

| | |
|-------------------------|--------|
| Underfloor heating | £6,300 |
| Kitchen units and doors | £2,500 |
| Tiles | £3,300 |
| Windows | £9,600 |
| Glazing | £5,500 |
| Second staircase | £3,500 |
| Steels | £3,800 |
| Timber cladding | £4,200 |
| Decking | £1,200 |

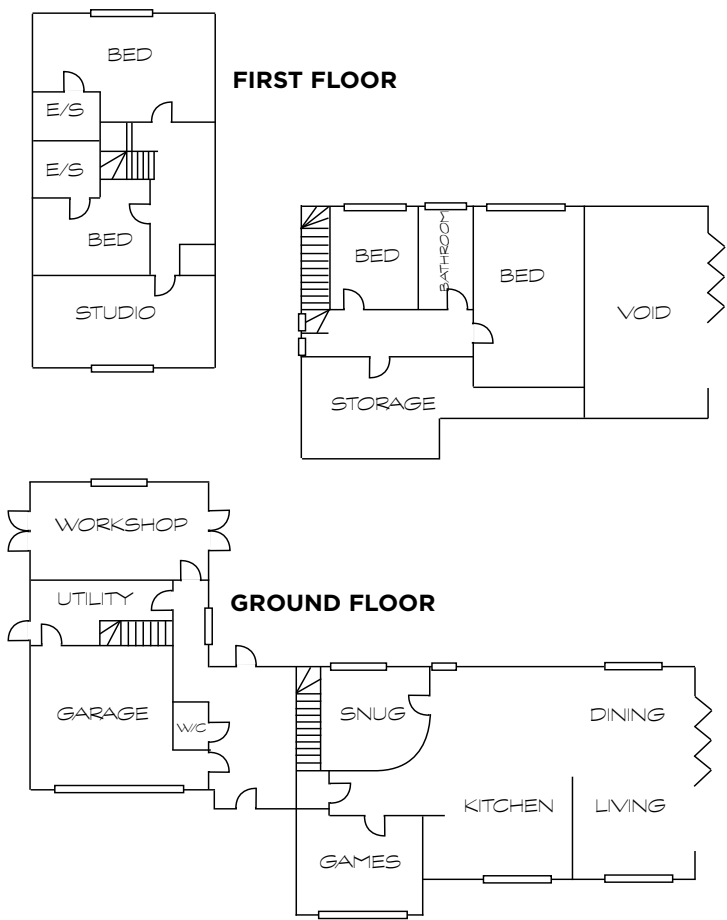
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| Plumber Tal Polak |07769 700145 |
| Underfloor heating Maincor |01455 555930 |
| Saey woodburning stove Stovesonline |stovesonline.co.uk |



Floorplans

Retaining only the exterior walls of the original bungalow, the interiors have been reconfigured in order to maximise on the home's coastal views. A new open plan kitchen/living/dining space dominates the majority of the ground floor, with a separate TV snug and games room. Two bedrooms and a bathroom can be found in the new mezzanine level above. The new building, connected via a glazed hallway link, features a double garage, utility and workshop, with two en suite guest bedrooms and a studio on the first floor above.



What We've Learned



What was your best buy?

Will says: Probably my 18-year-old Land Rover pick up. Everything for the whole project had to be either transported in the back of the truck or pulled behind it on a trailer due to the height and access restrictions to the site.

What is your favourite part of the house?

The open plan space. I positioned the glazing so that it allows the sun in at all times of the day.

Any key tips to pass on to those starting out on similar projects?

If you're building it on your own, be prepared for your resilience to be tested on a daily basis.

What is the most valuable lesson you've learnt?

The need to constantly hold on to the belief that, during all the stress of the build, one day the project will actually be finished!

If you could undertake the project again, what would you change?

In retrospect, it might have been easier if I'd had more help constructing some of the heavier and larger aspects of the work.

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Getting Stone Right

Finishing your home in stonework is no longer the preserve of those aiming for a traditional style. **Jason Orme** explores the options and how to achieve the look — and some interesting alternatives

Stone is an intrinsic part of the building landscape in the UK. The best known of course is limestone but granite, sandstone and slate are also key components of our British building history. If you're building or renovating in a stone-rich area then you'll be required in many instances to use stone as your cladding choice, and you will be joined by many others who love the solidity, look and feel of stonework so much that they elect to use it, in whole or in part, for their own projects, regardless of location.

But the truth is that many self-builders get it completely wrong by either choosing the wrong stone, getting it cut badly, or through poor laying/pointing — or, in many cases, a combination of all three.

It comes from the unavoidable problem that stone is the most expensive of all the cladding types and that those looking to cut corners almost always come unstuck. The happy news is that there are many pleasing solutions for those building in stone, giving more choice; that the 'alternatives' are more convincing than they used to be; and that, most importantly, if done well, stone can be the most glorious of materials.

Interestingly, there has been a redefinition of the appropriate context for stone in recent years. Long associated as a traditional building material, many of the best recent contemporary-style schemes have featured stone too — often applied in a different way (echoing dry walling techniques) but utilising the same stone. Planning authorities often feel that natural local materials such as stone can allow a contemporary structure to 'bed' better with its surroundings, making it easier to justify. ►



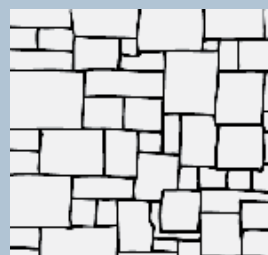
A Grand Affair

Robert Staveley's new Mickley Park home in North Yorkshire, built from scratch, is clad in split limestone cobble (from Calverts, calverts.co.uk) with sandstone detailing. Owing to its small coverage and rustic nature, it is very labour intensive

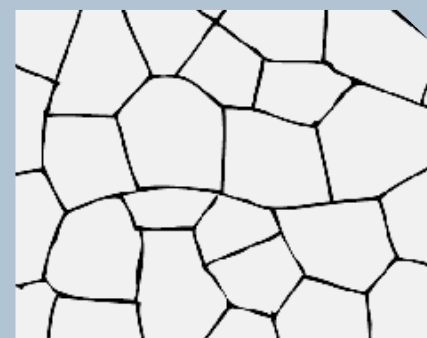
COURSES EXPLAINED



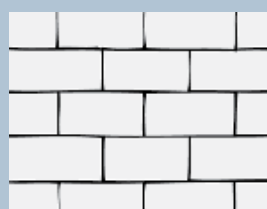
Ragwork, Slate Walling:
Rough thin stones laid horizontally, perfect for naturally thin slate.



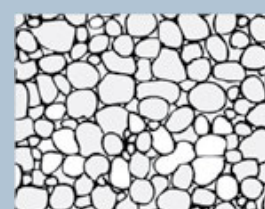
Uncoursed Ashlar:
Squarely dressed stones laid in different sizes in random order.



Polygonal Uncoursed:
Stones dressed to have many sides, laid in an irregular pattern.



Coursed Ashlar:
Squarely dressed stones laid coursed, in a methodical system.



Rubble Walls:
Random sized and shaped stones produce a random pattern.

NEW 'DRY STONE' WALLING

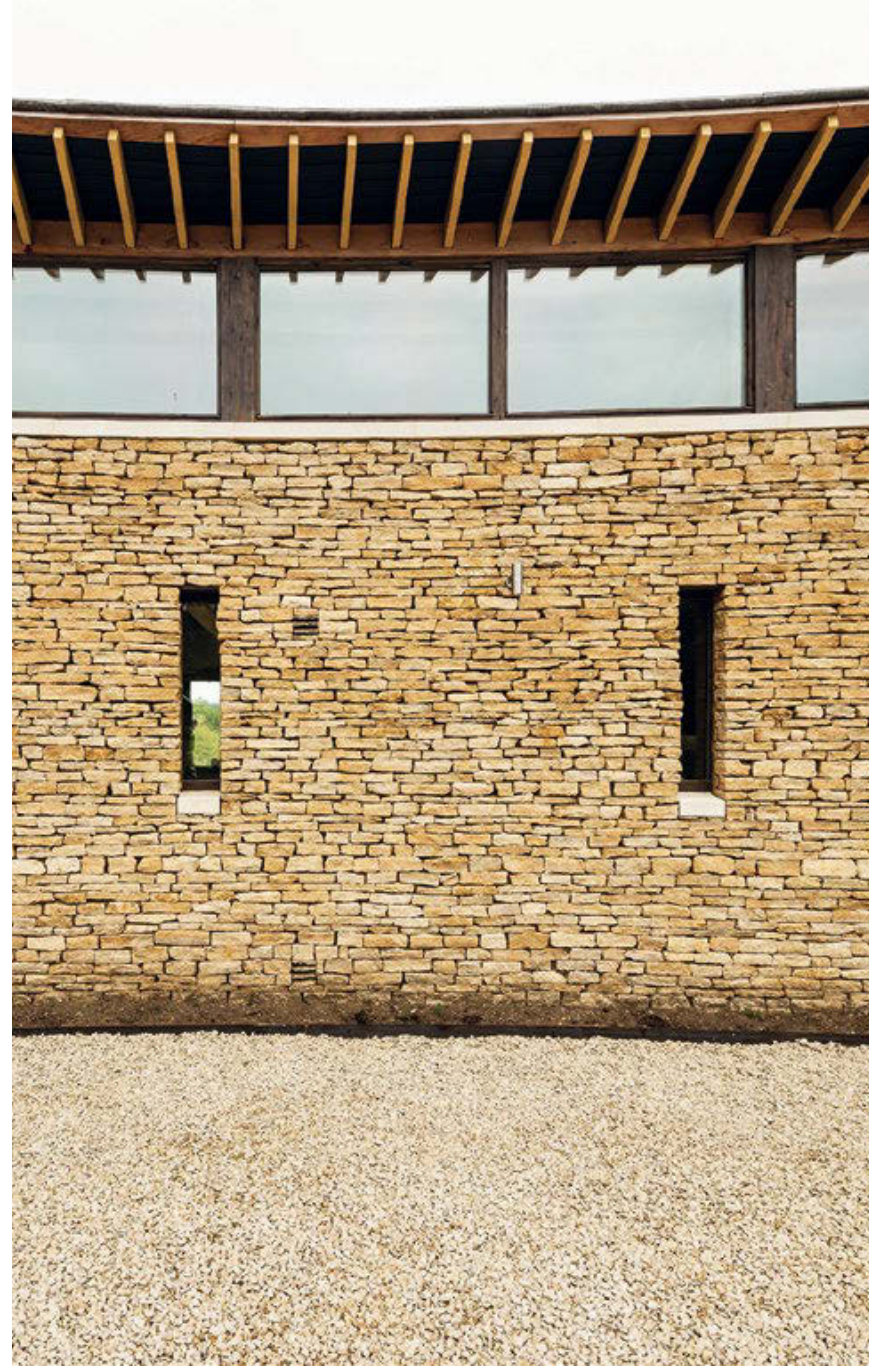
Stone has traditionally been the go-to material for those building or extending in traditional style, but in recent years some of the finest contemporary-style new homes in the UK have re-contextualised natural stonework — to great effect. Most commonly this is in the form of, to the naked eye at least, 'mortar-free' dry stone courses that in fact incorporate very thin jointing with a hidden mortar — a modern update on the traditional dry stone wall.

Architect George Batterham of Batterham Matthews Design is a big fan of the use of stone in this way and used it on The Daily Telegraph Homebuilding & Renovating Award-winning home he designed in Gloucestershire: Cranham Lodge (OPPOSITE and TOP RIGHT). This particular home uses a locally sourced limestone on a dramatic and highly contemporary curved front elevation — but the real highlight is the laying.

“They are best done by actual stone wallers who normally do field walls, as illustrated at Cranham Lodge, who focus on finding the right stone for a particular place, allowing a looser texture,” explains George. “Brick layers and stonemasons are trained to work with regular-shaped bricks and stone blocks and measure the quality of their work by how smooth and level their walls are.”

George calls the technique ‘two-thirds bedding’ which explains the key to its success. “Technically these walls consist of a facing stonework on a concrete-backing block bedded on the back two thirds only, so the stonework is not structural.

“In respect of the specification for the mortar used for the two thirds bedding, it is best to use a stone dust with white cement and lime, matching the hardness of the mortar mix with the stone used,” concludes architect George.



Hidden Mortar

A bold curved wall on the front elevation of this new contemporary home in Gloucestershire by Batterham Matthews Design, hides the mortar to create a modern dry stone wall effect



Stone with Timber

This award-winning home in Chepstow from Hall + Bednarczyk Architects is a fine example of how modern dry stone walling works in context with contemporary shapes and other materials



TRADITIONAL STONEMASONRY

Britain, of course, has a very strong history of building in stone — although it was only when woodlands began to diminish in the late 1600s that stone began to be considered an option for ‘ordinary’ buildings. For many centuries until then it had been the reserve of grander structures such as castles and churches.

Stone was expensive to extract and lay and it wasn’t until the 18th century that it began to be used for simpler homes such as cottages. Of course, Britain is now famous for its building stone thanks to its happy location on top of the Jurassic belt which runs from south to north and incorporates all of the nation’s limestones and sandstones. In areas where there was no local natural stone, such as London, necessity was mother to the reinvention of clay, found in abundant quantities under the ground in the south-east, as the main building material (for bricks).

The happy news is that stone is a viable (and in some cases essential) choice in most parts of the UK. Building stone tends to be a very local affair. It was hewn from quarries and, in the days before cheap transportation, could only be carried the shortest of distances. Some of these old stone quarries survive and supply the demands of the local construction trade. In some areas there are thriving second-hand markets in stone walling materials, yet nowhere is natural stone a cheap material.

Looking for quarries and good suppliers is usually best taken on in collaboration with an experienced local stonemason. Try the Stone Federation (stonefed.org.uk) or, ideally, your local conservation or listed buildings officer for any good recommendations on stonemasons. Another good resource is the Directory of Mines and Quarries, available as a free download from Minerals UK (bgs.ac.uk/mineralsuk).

The cost of laying stone varies a little depending on its characteristics and whether it’s coursed or not, but a good stonemason would hope to lay around 3m² a day, so the laying costs alone are likely to be more than the cost of most other cladding systems. That makes the typical stonemasonry costs on a stone-heavy home easily into the £10,000s. Most new stone walling is now laid against a blockwork backing wall, which must be taken into cost consideration. Typical prices for natural stone vary, but expect to pay £100–£150/m² including installation.

Installation and the mortar mix are critical to the success of your scheme. For tips on best practice when it comes to laying stone on traditional-style homes, see page 74.

One good day out for those looking to find out more about stone, how it is laid and how different regions have their own localised versions is a visit to the National Stone Centre in Matlock, Derbyshire (nationalstonecentre.org.uk). ►

STONE JARGON GUIDE

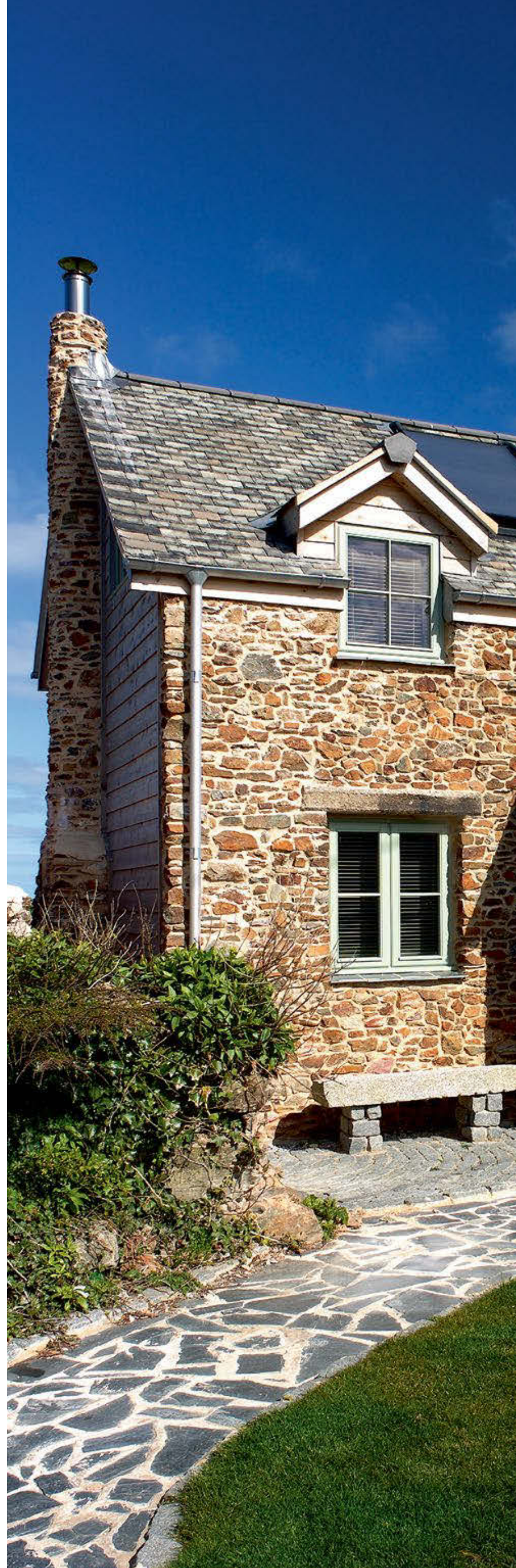
Punch Face: A form of flat facing — the technique of chiselling and ‘punching’ the stone to make it flat leaves a dimpled surface.

Pitch Face: The front face of the stone is uneven and protrudes.

Backed Off: This involves the supplier taking the back side off the stone itself to a specified depth, e.g. six inches (bed width) — meaning it can be laid immediately.

Random Stone: As it sounds — individual stones supplied as they come. Your stonemason will need to take the backs off.

Dressing: Cutting or manipulating the stone.





IMAGES: NIGEL RIGDEN; JEREMY PHILLIPS

CAST STONE



A cheaper alternative is to use a reconstituted stone. Although, to the practised eye, reconstituted stone will never look as good as the real thing, it will cost about half as much and, if done well, looks reasonably authentic. And because the product is manufactured, it's easy to course and therefore much quicker to lay, which also saves overall costs.

One interesting alternative is to use reconstituted stone cladding. Fernhill Stone produces a very convincing product (TOP RIGHT and TOP LEFT), which is set in moulds and is so realistic that it's virtually impossible to tell apart from the real thing. It costs around £40-£52/m² plus VAT to buy the tiles. It can be placed on a polystyrene backing (useful for people building with insulated concrete formwork) but it's usually stuck onto an outer blockwork wall. Fernhill Stone claim it's a job that can be carried out by a competent DIYer or tradesperson. The recommended mortar depth is 10mm, and they come in a range of thicknesses up to 50mm.

There are plenty of interesting alternatives too. Haddonstone supply their cast stone, most commonly used for garden ornaments, railings and so on, as a custom cladding material. Prices start from between £7-£20 incl VAT for one of their TecLite blocks (444x219x25mm). ■

● Visit homebuilding.co.uk/directory for a list of suppliers



Easy Fixes?

TOP RIGHT: Stone cladding from Fernhill Stone on this year's The Daily Telegraph Homebuilding & Renovating Award-winning home — and another example (TOP LEFT). LEFT: Haddonstone's TecLite blocks in action

POINTING AND MORTAR TIPS

The mortar should, at all times, be subservient and slightly lighter in colour than the stone. The pointing should also be subservient, and follow the outline of the stones. This means that pointing with a hard-looking cement mortar, which is often made to project a little and is trimmed along both top and bottom, should be avoided. "We try to discourage this ribbon pointing in which the mortar stands proud of the face of the wall," says Gloucestershire-based Edward Tyack of Tyack Architects, who specialises in buildings faced with Cotswold limestone. "Apart from being visually unpleasant, this sort of pointing creates ledges that trap water and lead to decay."

Most experts prefer a slight texture on the finish of the joint to a smooth trowelled finish. "This sort of finish is achieved using a stiff brush, but the action is one of tamping and not brushing," explains master mason Colin Burns, who has for many years been an instructor on pointing and stone laying techniques on courses run by English Heritage at West Dean College in Sussex. Colin says: "If you wish to avoid smearing and what we call tramlines on the finish of the stonework, the technique is to use a specialist brush called a churn brush to tamp the surface of the mortar after an early set, when it has a leathery feel. The vital thing is not to do this too early, otherwise you will end up with mortar all over the surface of the stone."

Good pointing is also about clean working and using the correct tools. Most specialists use a pointing key — a flexible metal blade that fits accurately into the width of the joint. Others use an American-style flitch with a cranked handle and flat blade as a tool of choice.

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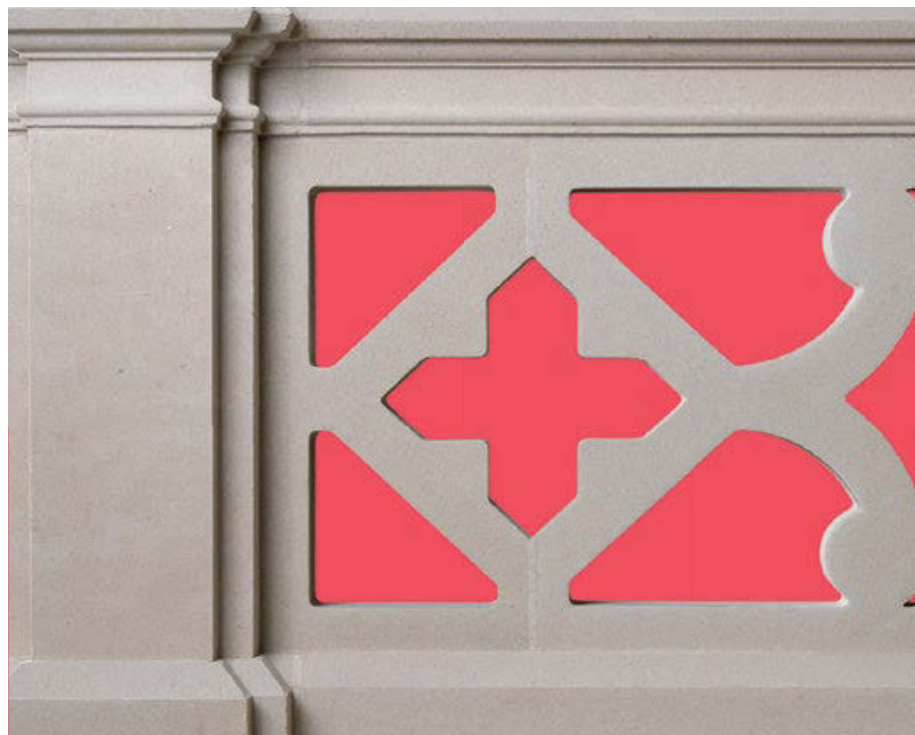


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Fire Surrounds

- THE GUIDE -

Whether you are installing a new fire or giving the existing one a makeover, choosing the right surround requires more consideration than just looks.

Daisy Jeffery explains, and uncovers the latest models on the market



CHOOSING MATERIALS AND STYLES

Depending on the style of your home, there are plenty of materials and styles of fire surrounds to suit all properties. Wood is the material of choice for country-style homes, and options are available from a wide range of manufacturers. “Wood, being a softer medium, offers many possibilities in terms of design,” says Matt Beckenham of Stovax Heating Group. “It can also be stained or painted to your specific taste. From ornately modelled rich cherry to a more simple design offering painted warm white, a wooden mantelpiece can offset a traditional period fireplace or a modern gas appliance with equal aplomb.” Brick surrounds with a timber mantle work well in country-style homes too.

If you are looking to specify a contemporary-style fire then stones such as marble, as well as brick and wood, are the materials of choice. However, many people choose to specify built-in or double-sided fireplaces for ultra-modern schemes.

Well Framed

This Nordpeis Q-34 cassette fire available from Stovax has been fitted with the Fargo surround featuring optional wood panels — a perfect offering for contemporary schemes. POA (stovax.co.uk)

If you live in a period or period-style property, it is worth researching surrounds typical of the era in which the house was built (or aspires to). Both Regency and Georgian properties for instance favoured ornate marble as well as stone surrounds. “Stone has been a traditional material since the medieval times, while marble has been used for more than 300 years and continues to be a well-respected choice with its classic appeal and longevity,” says Matt Beckenham. Wooden surrounds however were commonplace in Victorian homes, as was brick, and cast iron with its ability to diffuse heat was common during the Edwardian era.

SIZING UP FIRE SURROUNDS

In order to work out the size of fire surround you require, you will need to know the size of the appliance you intend to install; this will depend on the heat output required to warm the room. “Homeowners looking for an appliance to heat up a particular area of the house



should measure the proposed room first in order to find out the size of the appliance required,” explains Matt Forrester, Senior Design Engineer at Stovax Heating Group. “As a guide, we suggest that for every 14m³ (cubic metres) of space, you will need approximately 1kW of heat output in order to achieve a room temperature of 21°C.” Note that the opening should not exceed nine times the area of the smallest part of the chimney/flue. Fire surround manufacturers/suppliers will generally offer widths between 55.5-61 inches and heights of around 42-52 inches. There are however companies offering bespoke measurements.

MAINTENANCE

Like all aspects of the home, it is important to keep your fire surround clean, but the choice of material will determine how you maintain the look. If you have a marble surround for instance, washing the surface with soapy water and finishing with a wax polish will keep the marble in good condition. Materials such as brick, slate and granite can be brushed to remove dirt, however if the surface is particularly marked, then a caustic cleaner can be used for brick and a liquid detergent for slate and granite. Ceramic surrounds can be washed with hot water and diluted household cleaner, as can cast iron — you can update the finish of cast iron with a heatproof matt black paint too. Sandstone and limestone are the most difficult to maintain as they absorb stains easily, so it is best to consult with the manufacturer for recommendation. There are also some pH-neutral stone cleaners on the market suitable for cleaning these tricky surfaces.

THE COSTS

The material you choose will impact on the price. Wood, for example, is likely to be the cheapest with prices varying between £200-£800 depending on the size, detail of the surround, and manufacturer. Stone and marble surrounds retail from around £400 into the thousands, while cast iron is the most expensive material, costing between £450-£2,000. It is also possible to obtain original Victorian cast iron surrounds, however you can expect these to fall into the top end of the price bracket. If you are specifying tiles to create a surround, these will invariably be a cheaper option, costing in the low hundreds. ■

Best of Both

The Kent Bolection Georgian surround from Chesney's could be suited to both traditional and modern schemes, is made of limestone and measures 60x50 inches overall. Prices start from £2,100 excl VAT (chesneys.co.uk)

HOW TO FIT A FIRE SURROUND

- Firstly, you will need to ensure that there are no obstructive skirting boards as the hearth will need to touch the wall. You will then need to ensure there is a smooth, level layer of concrete to form the sub-base for a new hearth or floor covering — use a self-levelling compound if necessary.
- Mix a mortar and then lay the new hearth on the concrete sub-base central to the front of the fire opening. Check this is horizontal using a spirit level.
- Next, drill screw holes as recommended by the manufacturer's guidelines and insert rawl plugs. Place the back panel to the surround centrally on the hearth and screw it to the wall with the fixings supplied.
- Note that marble back panels can't be permanently fixed to the wall so you will need to stand it against the wall and hold it in place by fixing the mantel. Be aware that you will need an effective seal between the wall and the new fire surround — follow the manufacturer's instructions to get the right result.
- Finally, lift the mantel into place so it is central to the back panel and mark the screw positions, using a spirit level to ensure it is level. Fix the mantel to the wall with screws through keyhole angle plates. If your surround comes with a detachable mantel shelf then fix this according to the instructions provided. Be sure to leave a drying out time of around a week so the fireproof coating has time to dry properly.

See overleaf for the latest surrounds...

FURTHER CONTACTS

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| Stovax Heating Group | 01392 474000 |
| Be Modern | 01914 553571 |
| Haddonstone | 01604 770711 |
| Carron | 0808 129 2224 |
| Chesney's | 020 7561 8280 |
| Fireplace World | 0844 880 9301 |

Fire Surrounds



The Nordpeis Q-23 with Panama surround from Stovax features an optional log store.
● £3,495 (stovax.com)



The 18th century Chichester limestone surround from Chesney's features a corniced carved shelf.
● From £4,620 (chesneys.co.uk)



This integrated Riva studio 800 fire from Stovax featuring Santiago white fire surround tiles.
● POA (stovax.com)



Haddonstone's Louis XV surround with typical mouldings and shell decoration.
● £1,659 (haddonstone.com)



This modern real oak veneer surround comes as part of a suite and comes fully assembled with fire from Fireplace World. ● POA (fireplaceworld.co.uk)



The Isabelle marble surround from Be Modern is suitable for gas and electric fires and is available with lights.
● POA (bemodern.co.uk)



A traditional take on the integrated fire, this Victorian Corbel limestone surround is from Stovax.
● POA (stovax.com)



This simple Portland cast stone fire surround from Haddonstone features a gothic arch. ● £1,999 incl hearth (haddonstone.com)



The Georgian-style Volute solid oak surround from Carron boasts swirls that shape outward for a curved finish.
● POA (carron.uk.net)



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Project Clinic

Bob Branscombe

Top Tips for Better Project Management

Running your own building project is not for the faint-hearted. Experienced project manager **Bob Branscombe** reveals the best tips he's learned

If you have been reading other articles in this series on project management tips and techniques, you would find it hard to avoid the conclusion that the work of construction is based on distrust, poor performance, spiralling costs and abject failure.

In my experience, the management of projects is fundamentally about looking for the gaps between the works packages in order to cover off the need for assumption (which as we all know is very dangerous). Good selection of contractors and individuals will give you people who are not out to cut corners, but do not ever fall into the trap of thinking they will do something for nothing!

So, in the spirit of summary, here are a few brief tips which I believe are useful to keep in mind when acting as project manager on your own self-build.

COMMUNICATION IS KEY

Think of yourself as being the conduit via which all responsibility and information will and should flow. Expecting the carpenter to have a chat with the bricklayer prior to starting on site is a big leap of faith, yet far more common than you would think. The liaison between trades is a vital aspect in the progress of the works, and enables timely resourcing and deliveries of materials. Remember, you are looking to manage the gaps between the identified packages of works — it is not vital that you know what these

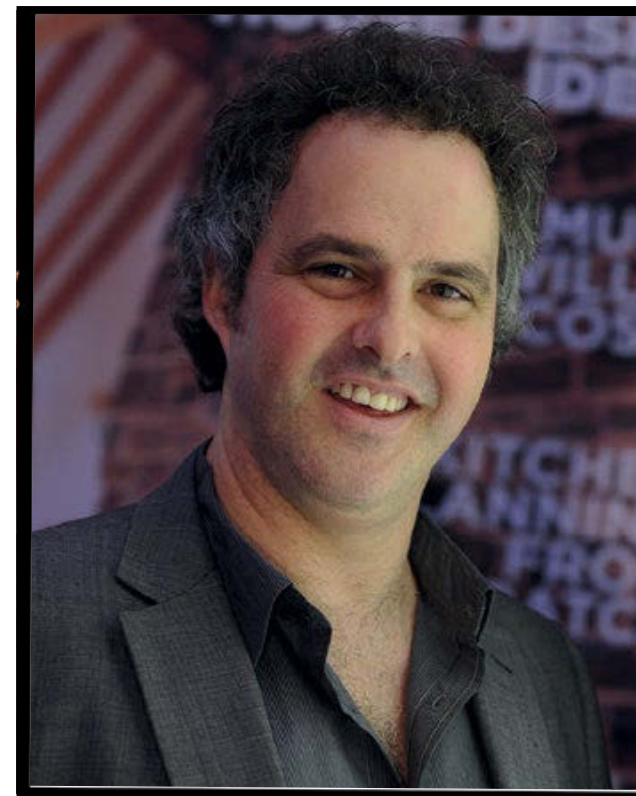
gaps are, but more important is that you discuss the possibility of this with the relevant people. Think of it as hosting a 'handover' between one package and the next and acting as a facilitator.

Don't be afraid of asking questions, even if you appear ignorant in the process. When dealing with the unknown, we often 'clam up' and don't want to appear to not be understanding. This is of course the main route to assumption. You are client, manager and boss — be it!

Make sure that everyone talks to everyone else. Prepare a project directory and distribute it so every member of the team has everyone else's contact details. Publish the programme. Have a schedule of tasks and plans for each day/week, so the whole team are aware of how they fit into the overall process. Email is good, phone calls are better, face-to-face is ideal.

KNOW WHERE THE PROJECT 'IS'

The programme of works is one of your key control documents and tools — ignore it at your peril. Draw it up with your team — consult with them, challenge their views, thrash out the programme until you are all confident it can be achieved. You have created a plan which everyone



Our Expert: Bob Branscombe

Bob is a project consultant with experience of managing schedules and costs on commercial and domestic building projects

has bought into, and is achievable, and that you can now all stick to.

The feedback loop from this however is often forgotten. Check each day how you are comparing to the programme. If it is slipping, look at mitigants and recovery solutions, and if you are ahead, look at recasting it to capitalise on this. The programme is one of the holy trinity of managing a project in my view — the others being cost control documents and planning permission.

It is essential that on any given day you as project manager are aware of progress, where you are on the programme and what you have left to do to complete the project. Any unforeseen or problematic issues can be appraised in terms of time impact immediately, based on sound knowledge rather than wishful thinking!

PLANNING CONDITIONS

While getting planning permission is a lengthy, tortuous process in many ►

“Most builders cite indecisive clients as the most trying aspect of their work”

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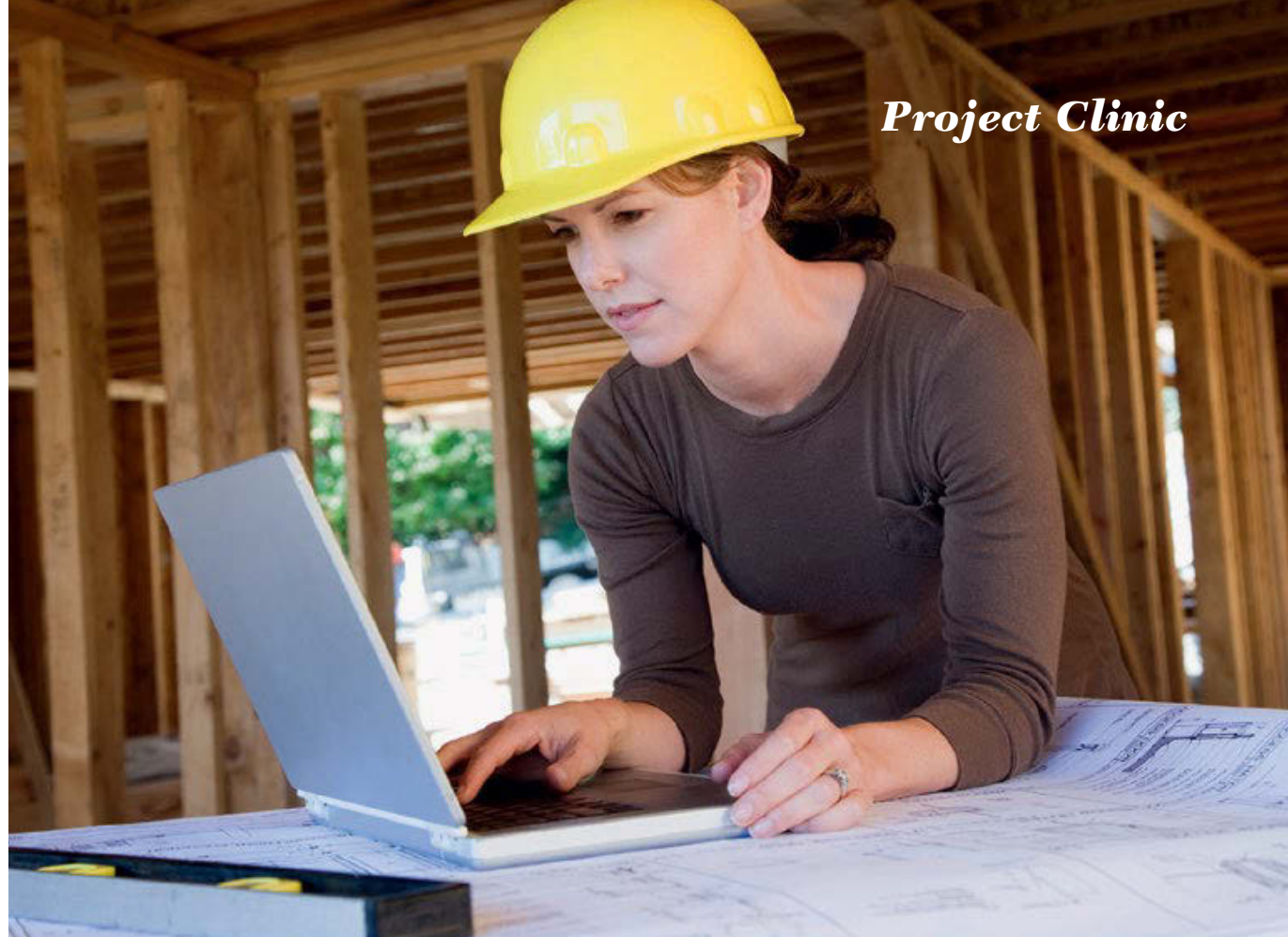
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ways, we tend to manage it well. It is often the only thing we are doing at the outset of the project, and is not diminished by the countless other pressures and tasks which befall us once work starts on site. But once we are on site of course, the planning permission is often more than just the full plans approval. The attached conditions can place significant restrictions and duties on the progress of the works, and failure to comply with these does in effect render your planning permission null and void until rectified. If you are using external funding, bear in mind that they are always concerned with the doomsday scenario that they might have to 'step into' the works in the event of your default. If planning is at all risky in terms of the conditional discharge, they will often not fund any works until this latent risk is removed.

The planning conditions typically include a requirement for the local authority to approve samples of external materials, such as the type of brick, roof coverings and so on. In practice, very few schemes are stopped due to this condition being ignored, but you can be sure that the local authority will not sign off the scheme finally until the condition is approved. Now imagine getting samples and materials approved after the house is built — what a risky strategy that is!

“I would be very nervous commencing a scheme with no contingency in place”

Similarly, there are often innocuous conditions affecting programmes — such as pre-commencement, pre-occupation and pre-completion conditions. These are requirements for things to be completed, provided, evidenced or demonstrated by certain stages. If there is a requirement for a traffic impact analysis prior to occupation of the finished development, you can be sure that you will not get a sign-off to occupy if you have not provided the traffic



impact analysis. Ignore these issues at your peril.

Good practice is to schedule them out, append them to the programme and think of them as part of the works. That way you will not ignore, or more often forget, about the planning conditions discharge.

CONTROL AND MANAGE CHANGE

Have a system which enables you to change things, including understanding and reconciling costs and programme impact. Your fixed-price contracts are based on the documented inputs, remember:

this takes the form of confirming that there is no impact on the cost or programme!

DON'T CHANGE YOUR MIND

Slightly tongue-in-cheek, but generally the best way to keep your fixed-price contract on budget and on programme is to cover off all your requirements initially in the documents and then don't change anything. Absolutely nothing. Now obviously in practice some elements will be tweaked, and often fundamental changes are necessary. My point here is that always consider the impact of any change, and start from a basis of 'sticking to your knitting' — time spent on design, planning and costing the works prior to starting on site will reduce the need for change to a minimum, and try to continue this mindset throughout the works. Most builders cite indecisive clients (and those who change their requirements frequently) as the most trying aspects of their work. This also has a direct impact on the dissatisfaction felt by both parties when the final account is presented. I have found over the years that most builders simply want to agree a price, do the work as quickly as possible, and then get paid. Changes often lead to disputes.

USE COMPREHENSIVE CONTRACT DOCUMENTS

Your documentation is the primary control and measurement tool for ►

In Control

If you're managing your own building project, you'll need to keep on top of costs and the schedule every day. Time and cost to completion is the key driver



the works. It contains a blueprint for your self-build and should cover everything: specification, costs, standards, planning compliance, prelims and so on. As a consequence, there is a direct correlation between the standard of the contract documents and the likelihood of achieving true fixed-price certainty. No prizes for guessing which way this pans out! Time and care spent early on getting the documents and bones of the scheme in place will absolutely pay off later. No question.

ALLOW A CONTINGENCY

You need one. I could continue with a long explanation of the means and methods of calculating it, and anecdotal evidence of projects where one

Communication is Key

Project management requires around one hour for every seven on site; be realistic about what you can give over several months

ditions, final fit-out material costs, mistakes and omissions on your part. Trust me, a contingency is vital. Keep hold of it, guard it well, spend it under great duress if you have to after you have exhausted all other avenues, and then value engineer it back in to ensure you are always in a strong financial position.

HAVE A 'PLAN B'

For every aspect of your project, consider what would happen if it could not be carried out as you wanted ini-

“The ‘cost to complete’ is the single most important driver”

has not been in place, and these will be countered by the self-builder who trusts their contractors and is so confident in the market place that the costs will not change.

But in reality, and in the current latent inflation market conditions, I would be very nervous commencing a scheme with no contingency, and would struggle to get project finance with none in place. There is tremendous pressure to get your budget right, the spec and scope strong enough to avoid change and increased costs, but you still have to cater for unforeseen ground con-

tially. Plan in alternatives, different methods of construction, alternative materials and alternative programme paths, all to give you flexibility and the means to keep progressing the works when you encounter immovable issues. This can be as simple as initially costing the project using masonry construction, but getting quotes for structural insulated panel (SIP) systems, for example, to enable you to consider different critical pathways for the superstructure.

You could be considering a very specific glazing solution which seems to always be subject to delays

and problems — while you can't change the system, by appreciating the likelihood of a delay, you can plan for a temporary screen solution which would enable internal work to continue and thus avoid critical path programme problems bringing the whole project to a halt.

DON'T ASSUME, ASK

The old adage, 'if in doubt, ask' never has more credence than with a self-managed home project. You will be dealing with more issues than you can possibly have full knowledge of, but do not fall into the classic management trap of thinking you have to pretend to know everything. You are the boss, and this is not up for challenge. You do not need to appear more experienced or knowledgeable than everyone else, and you should use your supply chain as a font of information advice and knowledge. If you can't explain an issue or situation to someone else, you haven't understood it. Find out. Learn. Understand. Then you are managing!

COST TO COMPLETE

The project manager who ignores the 'cost to complete' is not managing the project — they are reacting to it. The cost to complete is the single most important driver for your decision-making process, and is one of the few that cannot be rectified when it goes wrong. Very few schemes stall because of practical problems — they stall because they run out of money. Pure and simple. Reconcile your costs incurred at the end of each day. Add in your change instructions and anticipated changes to your existing costs left to spend. This figure can be deducted from the available funds, and ideally should, at worst, be equal. If you have a shortfall, it can be addressed prior to it becoming a critical problem, either by finding more finance, omitting some works, or value engineering. Either way, you are proactively managing, not reacting — better to know sooner rather than later.

Project management is the art of joining everyone else together — the synergy being that you are 'filling the gaps'. As they say, 'perfect planning avoids poor performance'. Plan to succeed, which means plan for all eventualities and don't assume all will be plain sailing! ■



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gothic. revival

James Gostelow and Andrew Morgan's renovation of a listed lodge house has seen original features restored and every inch of floorspace put to good use

RENOVATION | SURREY | BUILD TIME: MAR - SEP 13 | SIZE: 63m²
HOUSE COST: £340,000 | RENOVATION COST: £60,000 (£952/m²) | VALUE: £500,000



Exterior

The original windows were beyond repair so Crittall aluminium designs with diamond-shaped panes have been installed. Plastic rainwater goods have been replaced with cast-iron versions from Yeoman Rainguard, which also supplied a Victoria GRP hopper to complete the picture



WORDS: **NATASHA BRINSMEAD**

PHOTOGRAPHY: **ANDREW BEASLEY C/O ARCAID**

A move from their smart London apartment to a listed house in need of renovation in leafy Surrey may not have been what James Gostelow and Andrew Morgan first had in mind when they began house hunting, but they have fully embraced the change in lifestyle as well as the challenges that this unusual property has thrown their way.

“We were looking in and around the part of London we were living in but, not being cash buyers, found our offers were not being accepted,” explains James, who has a background in property investment and recently launched his own interior design business. “We were feeling a bit down in the dumps about it all and thought we’d drive out to see this place — and decided to put in an offer straight away.” They fell for the period lodge house in the countryside hook, line and sinker.

Despite the agent’s details describing it as ‘liveable’, the building was actually in a bad state of repair: there were leaks under many of the floors and it was full of damp. The property was originally built in the 1830s as one of two identical lodge houses, with a large seven-bedroom home located in the middle.

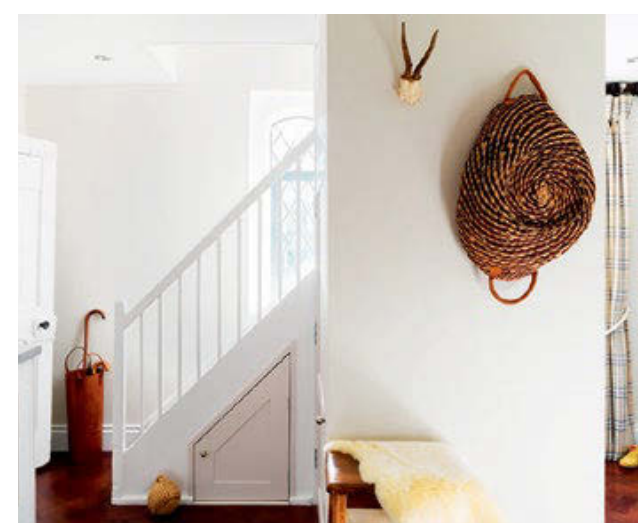
“The house had undergone a very cheap refurbishment around two years ago, where the emphasis had obviously been on a quick ‘do-up’ as opposed to focusing on saving any of the original features,” explains James. “We basically had to take it back to the core and start all over again.”

James was able to design the plans for the remodel himself and found the local planners very accommodating, despite the property being listed. “We used tradesmen who had experience of working with listed buildings, which I think helped a lot,” he says.

James and Andrew, who works in advertising, were keen to right the wrongs of the previous owners and so set about reinstating original features, but with modern comforts also at the forefront of their minds. ▶

“I was leaving home at 5am to visit the house before travelling to work, and then going back to the project in the evening too”





Ground Floor

The wall between the living room and kitchen has been partially opened up; visually this makes both spaces seem larger and creates a feeling of cohesion. The bespoke limestone fire surround is an elegant addition to the living room, while clever design solutions, such as the larder integrated into the staircase, also maximise on every inch of space available in this small home

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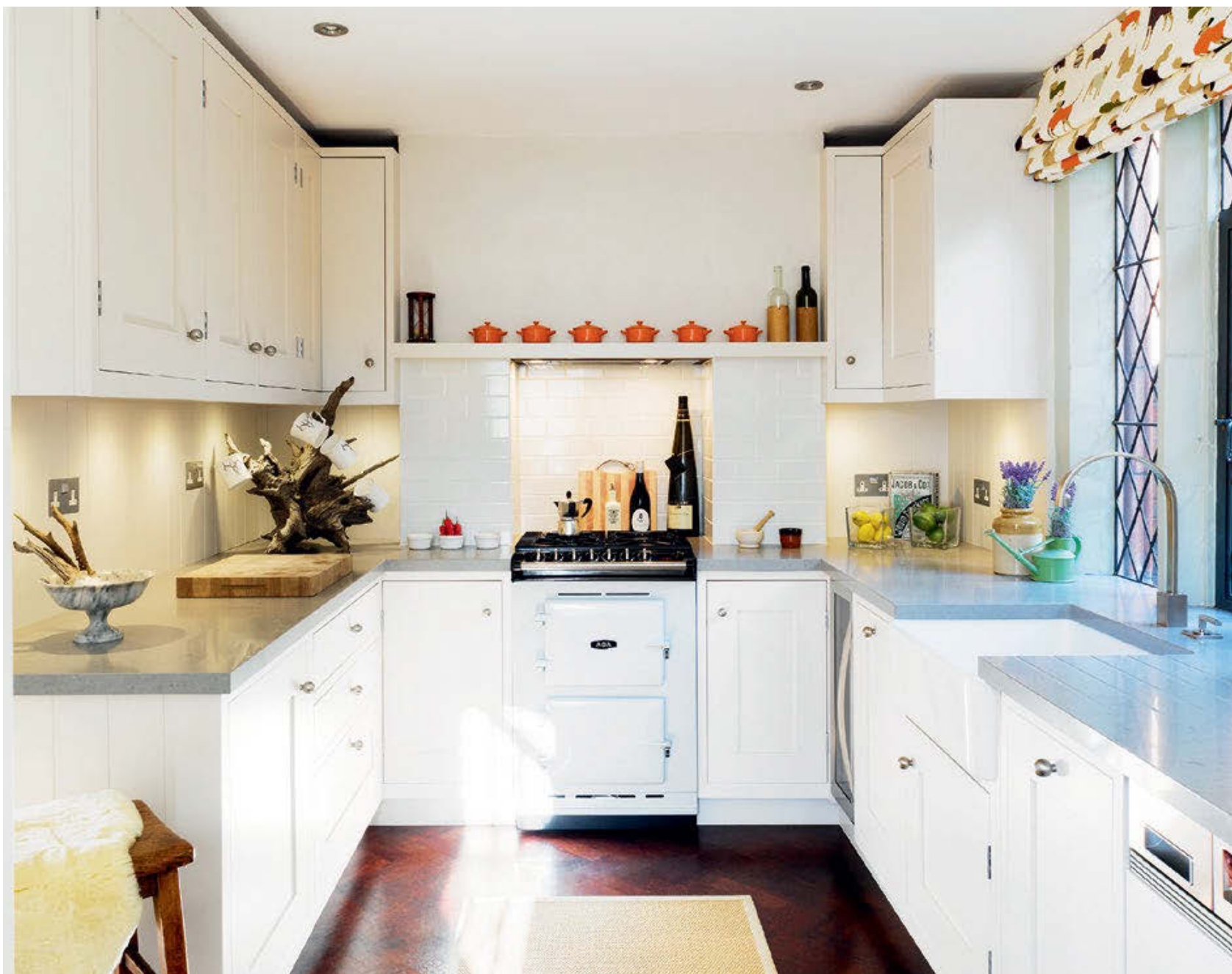
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“I’m a big believer in quality products, as opposed to those bought off the shelf, for this type of house”

Although the original Crittall windows were still in place when the couple bought the house, they were very badly damaged — beyond repair in fact. They have been replaced with new Crittall aluminium windows with diamond-shaped panes, and secondary glazing internally; a good alternative on listed homes, where double glazing is often not suitable.

Continuing their focus on restoring the former attractive appearance of the property externally, the rainwater goods, which had been replaced by previous owners with modern, unsuitable plastic versions, were taken away and more fitting cast-iron models incorporating traditional-style hoppers were put in their place.

The ground floor of the house had been subject to some very slapdash modifications in the past, so all the plaster had to be hacked away, a damp-proof course inserted and, crucially, many of the existing timber floor joists, which had been damaged by the damp and various leaks, had to be removed and replaced. The tiled floor, laid by the previous owners, was replaced with reclaimed parquet, too.

A full rewire of the property had to be carried out, and a new heating system put in place. Elsewhere, the

Kitchen

The existing kitchen layout remains much unchanged, but the kitchen has been given a makeover. A four-ring AGA is the focal point; so too is the butler sink, which sits below the beautiful new Crittall windows

transformation from botch job to original chic continued, with the existing fireplace fitted with a limestone surround and the basic panel radiators replaced with cast-iron column models. “I am a big believer in quality products, as opposed to those bought off the shelf, for this type of house,” says James.

James & Andrew’s Suppliers

Design James Gostelow jamesgostelow.com
Rainwater goods Yeoman Rainguard rainguard.co.uk
Repointing and brick repairs Ernest Barnes (specialist Grade II listed contractor) ernestbarnesltd.co.uk
Bathroom sanitaryware and accessories Ann Sacks annsacks.com
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The kitchen, too, has been the subject of a facelift. “Although we have replaced the kitchen, the basic layout has stayed the same,” says James. “We would have liked a full-size AGA in there, but it would have meant inserting a lintel into a fairly small area — plus this size works well in the space that we have.” The kitchen has also been opened up into the living room in order to create space in which to fit a dining area.

The first floor has been the subject of the most dramatic change, remodelled to suit the couple’s requirements. “The space didn’t work as it was,” says James. “There was a small bathroom with an absolutely tiny bath that was just unusable, along with two bedrooms.”

To overcome this problem, James and Andrew removed one wall in the master bedroom and moved it in, using the extra space for the bathroom. In the second bedroom, they have used part of the roof space for a new dressing room, with their main aim to grab as much usable space from the upstairs as possible.

James chose to manage the project himself while they continued to live in their old accommodation, but despite his background in the property industry, he admits he could probably have saved time and money by hiring someone to project manage the renovation. “I was leaving home at 5am to visit the house and brief the tradesmen, before travelling to work in the city, and then going back to the project in the evening too,” he explains.

Not being on site or having a project manager meant that when things went wrong, he was left to pick up the

Master Bedroom

One of the master bedroom walls has been moved in order to enlarge the adjacent bathroom. Neutral walls create a spacious feel here, with the new fireplace and cast-iron radiator being particular features of note

What I’ve Learned



What surprised you most during this project?

Looking back, getting a balance between work and managing a project was a huge challenge — the biggest of them all.

In retrospect, I would

have hired a project manager, which, in the long run, would have saved money in terms of trades’ timings and being able to manage the project daily in order to control tasks.

I am also a firm believer in choosing quality products: never cut costs on quality in regards to shelf life and also design — you want something that lasts. I would also say to always vet trades and make sure references are gathered prior to awarding a contract — and never rush a decision! I used a bathroom installation company who in the end have cost me money due to their lack of experience and knowledge.





Bathroom

The bathroom is a particular highlight of the property and has been enlarged by ‘stealing’ a few inches of floorspace from the master bedroom. The room was designed around James’ object of the design – a show-stopping marble sink from Design Centre Chelsea Harbour – with the extra-tall shower enclosure and sleek brassware following suit

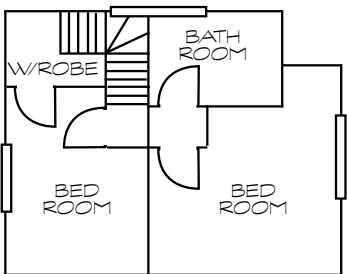
pieces. “We did have problems with a few of the trades,” he says. “My advice would be to really do your research on trades — get plenty of referrals and recommendations.”

Although James and Andrew are really happy with the way the project has turned out, they still have a few plans up their sleeves for the property. “If there wasn’t a budget to stick to, we would have liked to reconfigure the staircase to get a bit more space,” explains James. “We did go over our initial budget by about £5,000, but this was down to choice more than anything. We wanted the very best quality throughout and were aiming for a luxury, Mayfair-inspired style here. We would like to extend the house at some point as there is space outside.”

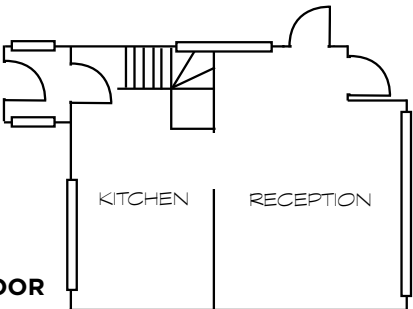
The lodge house has not only been restored to its former glory, but James and Andrew have succeeded in finishing it to the highest standards while making the most of the spaces they had available. “We instantly fell in love with this house,” says James. “We wanted to do it justice and keep it in its original state as much as possible.” ■

Floorplans

The lodge features a semi open plan ground floor, with light flooding in from windows in the living room at the front of the property, and kitchen at the rear. Every inch of space has been utilised, with a larder/storage cupboard ingeniously created beneath the stairs. The first floor has been remodelled, with the master bedroom wall moved so as to enlarge the bathroom, and with space under the eaves utilised for storage, including a small walk-in wardrobe.



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TURNING GARAGES INTO ROOMS

Not only does converting a garage into usable living space add value to a property, it can often be done without planning permission, explains **Natasha Brinsmead**



According to property experts, converting a garage to provide additional living space can add as much as 10 per cent to the value of your home. That aside, it is also the perfect way to make use of a space which, more often than not, is rarely used as somewhere to house a car — instead becoming a dumping ground for various items we don't know what to do with.

Using a garage to add to your floorspace avoids using up garden space for an extension and allows you to keep building work relatively separate and so any associated disruption is kept to a minimum too. “In terms of disruption, 95 per cent of the work is done within the garage,” advises Stuart Letts of Garage Conversion Specialists. “Creating the opening from the house to the conversion is one of the last things which we do to minimise noise and dust, etc.”

YOUR GARAGE TYPE

Garages tend to fall into three categories — attached, integral and detached. Each comes with its own issues:

Attached or Integrated

This type of garage is, as the name would suggest, connected to the main structure of the house, sometimes to one side, but also often projecting out from the front of the house with a room above, commonly a bedroom. Attached garages can usually be accessed from inside the house, making the conversion even easier.

Detached

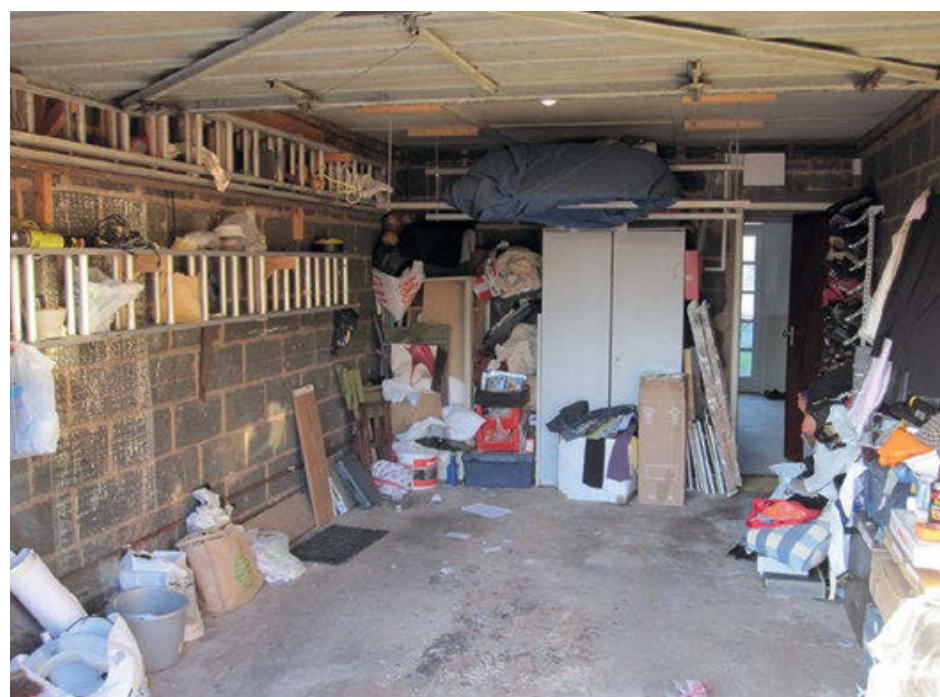
Just because a garage is detached does not mean it is not suitable for conversion into living space. However, you are more likely to have to apply for planning permission to change its intended use if it is a separate building.

SIZES

How much space can you expect to gain? A standard-sized single garage can give you around 14m² of extra space, so is ideal if you are looking for somewhere to house a home office, playroom or guest bedroom — or even a downstairs shower room and utility. It might also offer the potential to extend an existing space, such as your kitchen or hallway, depending on the layout of your home. A double garage can add around 28m² and gives you the option of using part of the space for storage or still as a garage and the rest as living space. The same goes for ‘tandem’ garages.

A BIGGER KITCHEN

The owners of this conversion, by Twenty5 Design (twenty5design.com), wanted a stylish new kitchen and to be able to open it up to the outside area. The steel lift-up garage doors were replaced with folding sliding doors to ensure maximum light. The conversion, including the new kitchen, from Second Nature (snccollection.co.uk), cost £24,000.





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CAN I CONVERT MY GARAGE?

Although most garages can be converted, there are cases where people run into problems. Check for any restrictive covenants or clauses that may prevent you from making changes that alter the external appearance of your home. Even if you find you are subject to such restrictions, you may still be able to convert the space, retaining the front section for storage and converting the rear area.

"You might require planning permission if you live in a Conservation Area or there is some type of restrictive covenant left on your property," confirms Stuart Letts. "All this can be found out by making a phone call to your local planning department, giving them your address and informing them that you would like to convert your garage. Then they can generally tell you there and then over the phone if you will need planning permission or not."

"You must submit a Building Notice to your local authority or private building control company before work commences, which usually costs in the region of £324," says Stuart. "The inspector will come out throughout the conversion checking the work. After the conversion is finished they will issue you with a final certificate. Without this certificate you may have problems if you ever come to sell your house."

The building inspector will be looking at ventilation, damp-proofing, insulation, fireproofing and fire escape routes and, of course, structural soundness. ▶

LIVING KITCHEN

This is the ideal way to get a larger kitchen with space to eat and entertain in without using up valuable garden space.

This garage conversion to a family home involved removing the rear wall of the garage where it backed on to the existing kitchen to open the spaces for an open plan area that could be enjoyed by all members of the family.

The brief also included an area for the children to watch television and use the games console, but not be in a separate room.

The conversion, not including the supply and fit of the kitchen, cost in the region of £10,500 from Garage Conversion Specialists (0845 370 5030; garageconversionspecialists.co.uk).



COST GUIDE

According to Stuart Letts from Garage Conversion Specialists, the average garage conversion takes around 10 days to complete. "A basic garage conversions costs in the region of £7,500 excl VAT," he says. "This includes submitting the Building Notice, liaising with the building inspector and gaining the final certificate at the end of the conversion. A fully equipped shower room generally increases the price of the conversion by around £2,500 excl VAT. A basic double garage conversion costs around £12,500 excl VAT."



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USING THE SPACE

Most garages, being originally designed to house a car, tend to be long and narrow — a shape that does not immediately lend itself to a good living space. For this reason it is common for people to break the space into two smaller rooms using stud walls, with the smaller of the two rooms often acting as a WC or shower room — or for storage (bearing in mind the conversion of the garage will take away some storage space).

When it comes to using the new room, this will clearly be determined by your own needs, and garage conversions are a great idea for a number of uses, including home offices. This can make perfect sense, as garages are usually located away from the main living areas and capable of having their own, self-contained entrance for work-related visitors.

“It is common for people to break the space into two smaller rooms”

Where garages adjoin the kitchen, knocking out the wall between the two in order to create one larger kitchen/diner is a popular option — and also overcomes the long, narrow issues. Another good use of garages that sit alongside a kitchen is as a utility room as they also offer the potential for a back door.

Using the space as a playroom and keeping it partially open to an adjacent kitchen makes it possible to supervise younger children while carrying out day-to-day jobs, and garage conversions are also the ideal spot for a second living room for older children to relax in — keeping the inevitable noise away from your own relaxing spaces. Other options include gyms, home cinemas and spare bedrooms.

In the case of detached garages, you have the option of converting them into a separate annexe, subject to planning consent. ▶



THE PLAY ROOM

This conversion, by Garage Conversion Specialists (garageconversionspecialists.co.uk), provides a playroom for the owners' daughters. As it was a double garage, a dividing fire wall was built between the new room and the garage to meet Building Regulations. An opening was created in the rear wall from the existing kitchen, a new insulated floor was installed, and the exterior walls insulated too. It took 10 days to complete and cost £9,000.



Garages

FLOORS AND WALLS

A common problem among those wishing to integrate their garage space into the rest of their home is that the floor levels are not the same — integrated garages are required to have a step down to prevent flammable liquids passing under doors.

Of course, it is fine to keep a step down, but in all likelihood the floor will require additional damp-proofing and insulation in order to meet Building Regulations anyway.

A new concrete floor can be poured with a damp-proof membrane added between the layers along with insulation before being given a screed finish. Alternatively, a raised timber floor can be built over the existing floor, with a gap of 150mm between the joists and original floor. Damp-proofing and insulation can be laid beneath and between the new floor.

In many garages a damp-proof course will have been laid in the walls when it was built, but do check this.

External walls are covered by Building Regulations and must meet requirements in terms of moisture-proofing and insulation. If you are converting an integral garage, the exterior walls will probably meet Building Regulations. Otherwise, a second block wall or a stud wall inside the existing exterior wall can overcome insulation issues — although obviously this will decrease the interior dimensions of the space.

Interior walls between rooms in the conversion must meet Building Regulations' requirements for fire-proofing. This can mean one or two layers of fire-proof plasterboard on stud walls, although for block walls this is unnecessary.

Detached garages usually require additional insulation if they are going to be usable spaces.

PLUMBING AND WIRING

Keep in mind that additional pipework and wiring in a garage will place greater demands on the household mains. Ask your electrician if this is likely to be an issue — an additional mains supply can be installed but the cost is highly variable, running between £500-£20,000. This will also require the



installation of a separate consumer unit. Otherwise, locate the garage on the current consumer unit.

VENTILATION

When you decide to use your garage as another room, adequate ventilation will be required in order to meet Building Regulations standards, and fire regulations need to be met too. A fire escape route is required with an opening introduced to be no less than 0.33m², while Building Regulations also requires that, for ventilation purposes, an opening of at least 1/20th of the floor area of the room served is created.

It is common to add windows or doors where the front opening of the garage once was — adding a block or brick wall to fill the gaps can bring the opening to a standard size while eliminating the need for additional footings due to the decreased weight when compared to a full infill wall — sometimes an issue, particularly in the case of detached garages built some time ago. ■



THE DINING ROOM

The purpose of this garage conversion was to provide extra family space. The work, carried out by Garage Conversion Specialists, involved removing some internal walls and fitting steels to support the new spaces. In total the project cost £11,000, including work to open up the existing kitchen and dining room to the new space.

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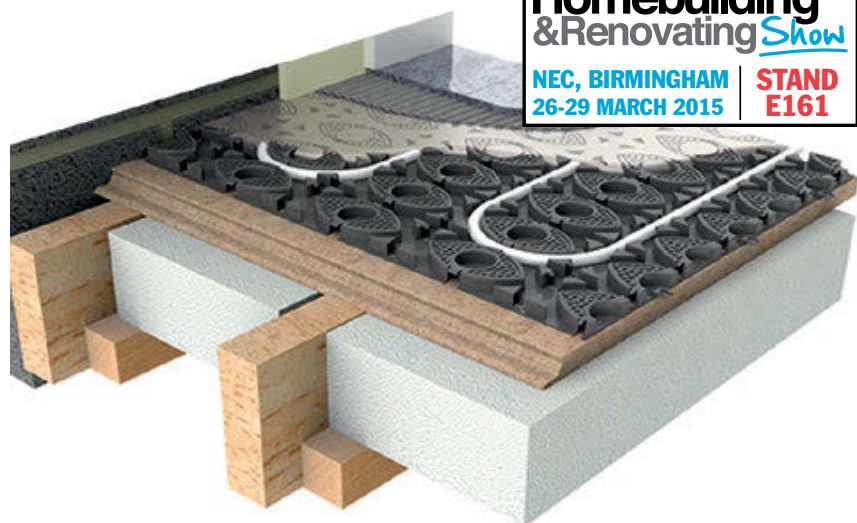
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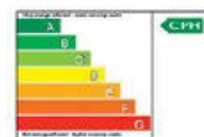


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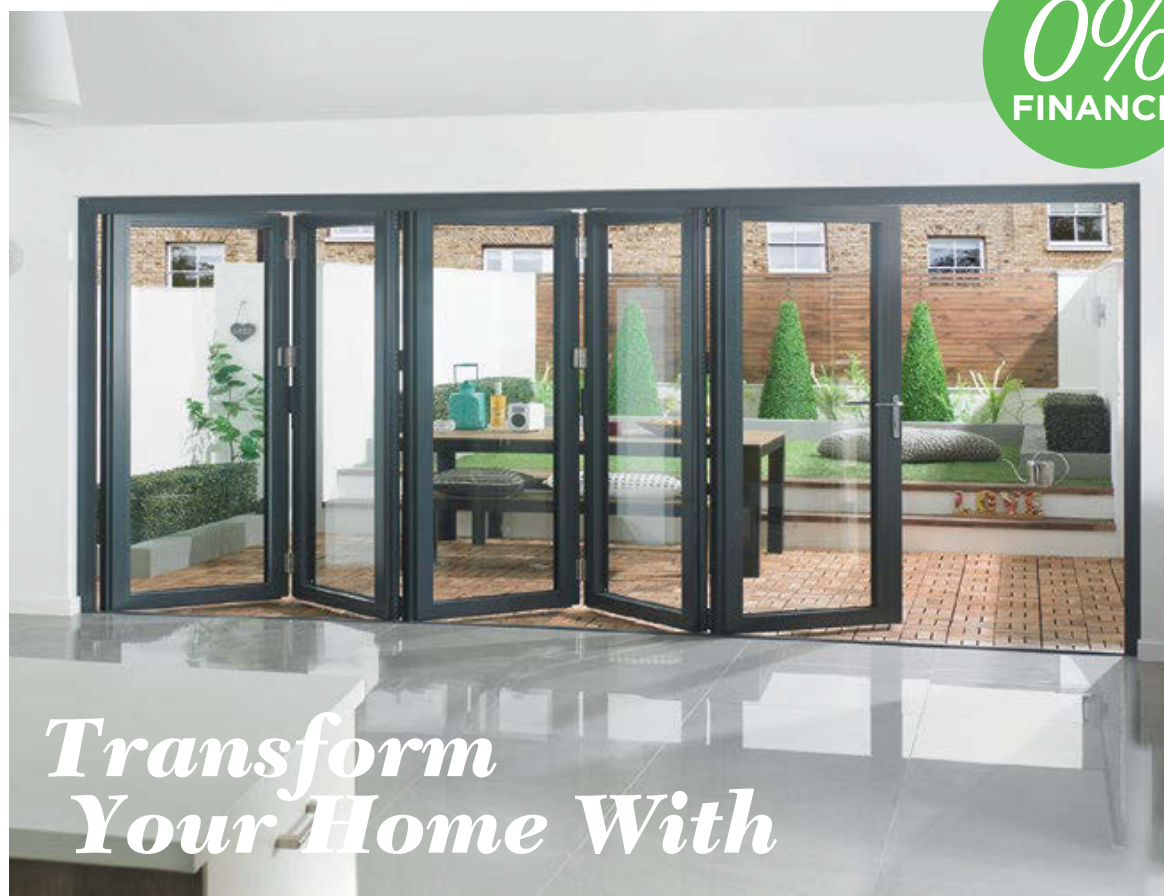
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ABOVE: **Inspire oak veneer internal folding room divider** with four-door configuration, H200.5xW239cm, **£1,099** including delivery

LEFT: **Supreme aluminium external bi-fold doors** with five-door configuration, H209xW419cm, **£4,779** including delivery



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Working with Old Ceilings

From cracks and bulging to dreaded artex, ceilings can be subject to a whole host of problems. Step in chartered surveyor **Ian Rock** to provide the answers

If you wrote a book entitled 'Crimes Against Property', the chapter on ceilings would contain some pretty grizzly horrors. Top of this list is thick, textured 'artex'. There is something profoundly off-putting about forests of drips frozen in time, dangling above your head. As if that wasn't bad enough, textured coatings often contain small amounts of asbestos fibres. Fortunately this is not considered a hazard as long as you do not drill, sand or damage such coverings and inhale the fibres.

Other distinctly naff ceiling treatments from the past include peeling polystyrene foam tiles, cheap '80s Swedish sauna-inspired pine cladding, and gloomy office-style suspended ceiling panels with barely concealed strip lights. Painted woodchip or anaglypta wallpaper is aesthetically pleasing by comparison. But looks aren't everything.

Given that in a raging house fire the flames will track across ceilings, it's obviously not a good idea to smother ceilings in flammable materials. One can only speculate

About the Author

Chartered surveyor Ian Rock MRICS is the author of eight popular Haynes House Manuals, including the 'Period Property Manual', and is a director of Rightsurvey.co.uk

as to the motivation behind such 'improvements', perhaps to conceal unevenness or cracking. Or maybe these were simply misguided attempts to keep out the cold? Unfortunately, however, the degree to which such materials enhance thermal or sound insulation is minimal. Today most buyers want to see smooth, plain plastered ceilings, or in period homes, naturally undulating original lath and plaster.

LATH AND PLASTER

Most pre-1930s houses have ceilings made of traditional lath and plaster which has a pleasing texture that's slightly irregular. 'Laths' are thin strips of wood (about 25mm wide) nailed to the ceiling joists, spaced about 5mm apart. Plaster was then applied to the underside of the laths, held in place by being squeezed through the gaps to create a 'key'. The plaster was made from lime mixed with sand, bulked up with horse hair for strength, usually applied in two or three layers to an increasingly fine finish.

To check what type of ceiling you have, take a look from above, under the loft insulation, or lift a bedroom floorboard. If there are a lot of small timber laths with creamy blobs of plaster in between, the ceiling is original. There are good reasons for retaining original ceilings. As well as enhancing historic interiors, traditional lath and plaster is chunkier and has better soundproofing and insulating qualities than modern

plasterboard. Unfortunately, some builders are quick to condemn old ceilings with the odd crack or bulge, but they are usually repairable for a fraction of the cost of replacement.

PLASTERBOARD

Plasterboard consists of sheets of compressed rigid gypsum plaster sandwiched between heavy-duty lining paper. Boards are available in thicknesses of 9.5mm or 12.5mm and are fixed to joists using drywall screws (clout nails are no longer used). Once the plasterboard is in place, the joints can then be sealed with scrim tape, filled and the surface given a skim finish with a thin coat of plaster.

OTHER MATERIALS

'Fibreboard' sheets were a forerunner to plasterboard during the inter-war period. Made from compressed wood fibre, the sheets are tan in colour with a soft spongy feel. Defects are similar to those of plasterboard, although fibreboard is flammable. Thankfully less common are ceilings made from asbestos cement sheets, again sometimes seen in 1920s and '30s houses (used also to repair bomb damage in the war). Both these types of ceiling often comprise of a timber framework infilled with panels. Because this form of asbestos isn't usually a hazard (as long as the fibres are not breathed in) there shouldn't be any significant risk. Such ceilings can be concealed with plasterboard or by a new suspended ceiling. ►

Unless essential, avoid pulling down old ceilings — this is one of the filthiest jobs known to man



IMAGE: SHUTTERSTOCK

Original Features

Damaged original cornicing and ceiling roses are well worth saving. A plaster specialist, for example, can take a 'squeeze' of the original cornicing and reproduce missing sections, or run traditional plaster in situ if the design is particularly complex.



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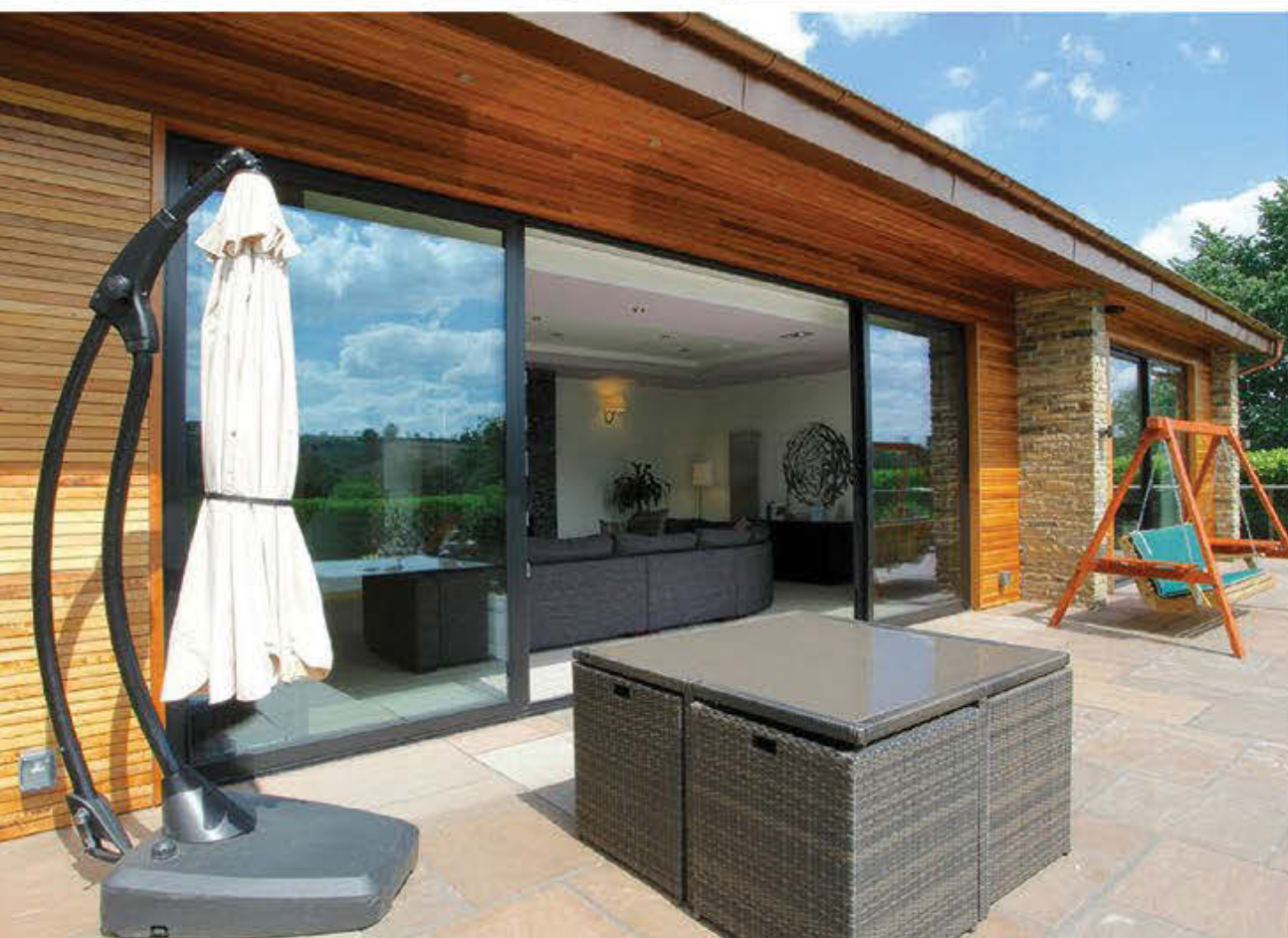
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CORNICES AND ROSES

Victorian ceilings usually have beautiful plaster cornices and mouldings at the junctions of walls and ceilings, and commonly feature elaborate ceiling roses. Wherever possible, these small works of art should be preserved and restored — for most buyers they add to the property's appeal and value.

By now most will be clogged with paint, but a lot can be achieved to restore them to their original glory using poultice strippers, a brush and a toothpick. However, major restoration of decorative plasterwork is a skilled job. Missing sections can normally be professionally recast (DIY store mass-produced coving is a vastly inferior species compared with intricate original plaster mouldings). Reforming short lengths of defective moulding or corning costs around £63/m.

Even where a ceiling genuinely needs to be demolished (not usually advisable) it should be possible to remove the ceiling right up to the mouldings, leaving them in position.

DECORATION

Ceilings sometimes tell a story. For example, if the former residents were hardened smokers, the once virgin white expanse above may by now be a natty shade of nicotine brown (paint manufacturers no longer stock this tone). Emulsifying a ceiling is well within most DIYers capabilities. But the job becomes a lot more challenging when confronted with layers of old woodchip wallpaper or anaglypta, or where ceilings are entombed within thick layers of artex or in polystyrene tiles. Here, wallpaper steamers and scrapers may be needed. Surfaces suffering from flaky paint or small hairline cracks may first require the application of a painted base coat prior to lining or emulsifying.

TEXTURED FINISHES

As noted previously, artex-type coatings may contain small amounts of asbestos fibres (at least those built before 1999 when all forms of asbestos were finally banned). Stripping



INSURANCE

In some cases it may be possible to claim on your buildings insurance for damage to ceilings. Insurers won't usually pay out for leaking roofs (defined as a 'lack of maintenance'), but may pay for water damage due to storms or for sorting out the consequence of a leak.

Repairing Existing Ceilings

Repairs to existing ceilings such as filling cracks and decorating are often within the remit of the DIYer, but tasks such as plastering are jobs best left to the trades

textured paints can be done by steaming and careful scraping, taking appropriate precautions with dust masks and goggles. Sanding should never be attempted.

There are a number of DIY plaster products on the market for 'smoothing over' textured surfaces too. These claim to be able to achieve a perfectly smooth surface that's ready to paint. But for larger areas they can work out relatively expensive, so it may be a better idea to employ a professional plasterer. Plastering over artex finishes is possible — having first knocked off all the peaks and giving it a bonding coat of PVA glue — but there is a risk that if it's subjected to vibration or door slamming then it can drop off. The best advice is to knock off the peaks and then fix a fresh layer of plasterboard underneath, tape the joints and skim plaster as normal.

MINIMISING MESS

Unless it's absolutely essential, avoid pulling down old ceilings. This is one of the filthiest jobs known to man, particularly if the ceiling is in a Victorian bedroom with over a century of accumulated soot in the loft. If impossible to avoid, the room should first be scrupulously sealed for dust before taking down the ceiling. Then consideration needs to be given to the logistical task of carting dozens of bags of dusty plaster out of the house. If it's a bedroom ceiling, all the insulation and stored items in the loft will need to be temporarily accommodated too. Plus, the ceiling light will need the attention of an electrician. Then of course there's the job of plastering — which also involves a fair amount of mess. So, if possible, rooms should first be completely cleared, or at least covered in dust sheets.



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SAGGING AND BULGING CEILINGS

IDENTIFICATION

Uneven ceilings, cracked finishes and bowed surfaces are signs. In older houses some areas of plaster may have become 'live', sounding hollow when tapped.

IMPLICATIONS

This will depend on the type of ceiling. Plasterboard tends to warp when very wet, and in extreme conditions ceilings can collapse (i.e. from burst pipes and overflowing tanks in lofts). Ceilings can sag where the plasterboard sheets were not fully supported with enough screws when first fitted, too.

Old lath and plaster ceilings are naturally uneven — which is part of their charm. They can fail if the old plaster was mixed with insufficient hair reinforcement, or the laths were fixed too close together leaving too narrow a gap for the plaster to squeeze through and form nibs. The plaster then loses its key and falls away. Or, the coats themselves may have separated. Other causes include overloading and vibration, damp, decay or damage caused by beetle infestation.

REMEDIAL WORK

With a plasterboard ceiling, once the cause of any dampness has been eradicated, the affected area can be cut out and replaced with an infill piece of board and plastered to match. Poorly supported boards will need additional fixing with drywall screws. Boards should be fixed to the joists and screwed every 150mm.

New sheets of plasterboard can be fixed directly on top of (i.e. underneath) an existing damaged ceiling. The new boards must be staggered relative to any existing cracked ones and the screws need to be at least

Old Ceilings

Lath and plaster ceilings, a familiar sight in pre-1930s homes, provide a pleasing undulating aesthetic. Such ceilings are created by applying plaster to laths — strips of timber, around 25mm wide, nailed to the joists above

65mm long. Fitting new plasterboard to the underside of an existing ceiling of a room 3.5x3.5m in size, with plasterboard joints 'scrimmed out' and fully plastered, will cost in the region of £400*. (Clearing the room and decoration costs excluded.)

Where old lath and plaster ceilings are badly bowing, the area of sagged plaster can be propped from below using a sheet of plywood and a length of timber to temporarily push it back into position. Then, working from above, pour rapid setting plaster along the line of the gaps between the laths to form new nibs (after a light preliminary spray with water to prevent suction). Once dry, the prop can be removed.



IMAGE: SHUTTERSTOCK

CRACKS IN LATH AND PLASTER

IDENTIFICATION & IMPLICATIONS

Small, irregular-shaped cracks and severe unevenness are signs. Unless the cause of cracking is addressed, there's no point replastering because it will just crack again. Ceilings crack for a number of reasons: there may be too much weight in the loft

...continued overleaf

continued from page 115

(such as a heavy water tank), or very heavy furniture to the floor above. In some older properties the original builders may have skimped on the number or size of joists, or the spans are ambitiously long, or joists may have subsequently been cut for heating pipes.

What's more, ceilings move in tune with the rest of the house, and old buildings with shallow foundations tend to naturally move with the seasons, so thin cracks may reappear, needing periodic redecoration.

REMEDIAL WORK

Excess loadings in lofts and upper floors should be removed or repositioned. Weak floor and ceiling joists can be doubled up with new members placed alongside, or supported with a new beam run underneath (but consult a structural engineer first).

Check cracked areas for lumps of loose plaster by pushing very gently. If the problem area is fairly small, cut out the loose part and fix a piece of plasterboard to the joists. Or 'patch repair' plasters can be applied to fill the bare area. The same remedy can be used where small clumps of plaster have fallen away exposing the laths behind; apply a thin surface coat to achieve a flush finish.

Where the laths have come loose, any sound ones can be refixed to the joists using screws with wide washers. Additional support for loose laths can be provided by fixing new battens between the joists, working from above. Defective laths can be carefully cut out and replaced with new ones (available from specialist suppliers). Where an old ceiling is badly damaged, the part in poor condition can be taken down and reconstructed, reusing some of the sound existing laths.

MOULDY CEILINGS

IDENTIFICATION & IMPLICATIONS

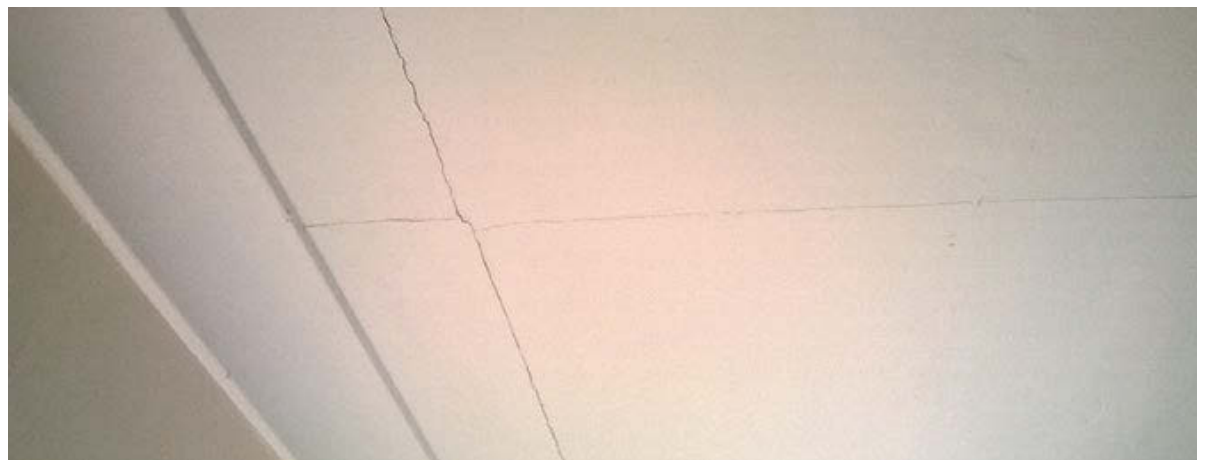
Recurrent black mould growth can be a problem in many a home. This is a common localised problem resulting from condensation forming on ceilings that abut cold spaces, such as lofts, rear extensions or flat-roofed areas. It is caused by poor insulation and a lack of ventilation and tends to be most evident in rooms where moist warm air is generated such as bathrooms and kitchens. When steamy vapour hits a cold ceiling it will condense back into water.

REMEDIAL WORK

The solution is to insulate above the ceiling (where access is possi-

ble) with mineral wool to a depth of at least 270mm, allowing a path for ventilation above. Alternatively, ceilings can be lined internally with thick polyurethane-insulated plasterboard. Improving ventilation is important too — for example, through the introduction of extractor fans, or with open fireplaces, or trickle vents to windows. Make sure tumble driers are ventilated to the outside, and if possible, minimise activities such as indoor clothes drying and boiling food.

To get rid of the mould, clean it off with water and apply diluted bleach (1:4 bleach/water solution) or a suitable fungicide. Then finish with a coat of mould-resistant paint.



CRACKS OR UNEVENNESS TO PLASTERBOARD CEILINGS

IDENTIFICATION & IMPLICATIONS

Thin, straight hairline cracks at plasterboard joints, and/or exposed nail heads are signs. Cracking between plasterboard panels is not, however, normally a serious problem. It may be down to poor original fixing, the tape and fill joints being omitted, or using cheap textured paint in lieu of a professional plaster finish. Thermal movement can be a cause too, and is caused by different adjacent materials expanding and contracting at different rates relative to each other.

Another common defect is where you can see lines of small, round craters (about 10mm wide) or lumps, due to clout nails being nailed in either too far or not far enough.

REMEDIAL WORK

Joints can be raked out and filled using a covering strip of jointing tape before applying joint filler and plastering over. Consider lining with a heavy-gauge lining paper to conceal the joints too. Cutting out and making good a crack will cost in the region of £11/m. Where surfaces are marred by exposed clout nails, apply a sufficiently thick skim plaster finish, having first inserted some additional screws to improve support for any loose boards.

When plastering new plasterboard, each joint between sheets must be taped over with self-adhesive scrim about 50mm wide. This is then filled with joint filler prior to skim plastering. ■

Plasterboard Ceiling

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A 1970s bungalow is transformed thanks to a clever scheme of small extensions, external makeover and internal remodel

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SIZE: 195m² | HOUSE COST: £360,000
BUILD COST: £160,000 (£820/m²) | VALUE: £800,000

WORDS: JASON ORME | PHOTOGRAPHY: BRETT CHARLES

Angie Faulker certainly had a bit of vision when she came across an individual early 1970s home on a delightful green belt riverside plot in a pretty village between Bristol and Bath. Despite its idyllic setting, the house wasn't exactly in demand — its mid-century design flourishes being somewhat lost on the 21st-century housebuying public. But in the clean lines, groovy feel and location, Angie could see the end result.

"I first met my architect Jon Foulds when I was running a smoothie bar in Bath," begins Angie. "I got to know him over the years and when I took on this house, he was the first person I went to."





The Daily Telegraph
**HOMEBUILDING
& RENOVATING**
MAGAZINE
AWARDS 2014

**SHORTLISTED
REMODEL/
EXTENSION**

External Makeover

The 1970s bungalow has been transformed into a contemporary home designed by whiteBOX Architects, with vertically laid stained larch, a new front door and new windows featuring. The left-hand element has been turned from a garage into usable internal space

“Luckily,” says Jon, “we shared a similar vision for the house. We could both see the potential to create a modernist-inspired home, with only modest intervention. A few tweaks externally, and a lot of internal reworking, and we knew that this could be a great house.”

Seeing the potential beauty in this architectural ugly duckling, Jon (who, by this time, had set up his own practice, whiteBOX Architects) and Angie set about coming up with a scheme based on the restrictions of the 30 per cent volume increase allowed under local planning policy and the relatively modest budget of £150,000.

Fortunately, the fact that it was an existing home meant that there were no special requirements in terms of flood alleviation. Indeed, the first job was in fact to build a new self-contained ‘annexe’ right by the river which consists of a couple of rooms – it’s little more than a poolhouse/shed – which Angie lived in while the house was deconstructed and put back together.

“Minimal intervention was key,” explains Jon. “We have extended one half of the rear to create a flatter elevation, and built two new dormers (the chalet bungalow had a room in the roof but it was tiny and cramped) into the roof. We’ve reclad the house, added new windows and door positions, and removed and replaced plenty of the home’s original internal walls. It has been completely opened up inside and it’s now light, airy and really makes the most of the site.” Outside, the front elevation has been reclad in vertically laid stained larch. To the rear, horizontal oak boarding provides ▶



“I really feel like we have pushed the house into the 21st century”

Angie’s Suppliers

| | | |
|---|---|--------------------|
| Architect | whiteBOX Architects Ltd |01225 314116 |
| Main contractor | Gratton Ltd |07809 830689 |
| Structural engineer | Franklin Associates Ltd |01225 426643 |
| Building Control | Bath and North East Somerset Local Authority Building Control |01225 477000 |
| Heating engineer | David Adcock Heating Services |0843 261 9082 |
| Rooflights | Gratton Ltd |as before |
| Doors and windows | Glass Consultants UK Ltd (Bristol) |01179 664216 |
| External timber cladding and bespoke timber staircase | M J Derrick |01275 839600 |
| Kitchen | Howdens |howdens.com |
| Flat roof | S P Isaac |01225 339241 |

JCT HOMEOWNER CONTRACTS

The Homeowner Contract from the JCT (Joint Contracts Tribunal) has become the most commonly used ‘formal’ contract between homeowners and main contractors carrying out work on their home. It offers, in relatively jargon-free terms, a template for a binding agreement between the parties on issues such as the scope of the work, the payment and payment schedule, and so on. This is, of course, all detail that should be worked out anyway but in many ways the beauty of the JCT contract is that it ensures nothing is missed out of any agreement. Set out into two main categories – effectively the main project and then conditions which may arise (e.g. overruns) – the Homeowner Contract also makes arrangements for adjudication should the need for it arise.

There are a range of other contracts available too (including the RIBA Domestic Building Contract) that we will examine in greater detail in future issues. The JCT Homeowner Contract costs £22 plus VAT (from jctltd.co.uk).



Internally Remodelled

The previously pokey interior has been opened up significantly with the removal of the hallway, separating walls and more. A sturdy steel post provides support and a useful element of zoning for the open plan ground floor. The kitchen units are from Howdens, while the worksurface is architect Jon's own design, built in walnut





an interesting and easily maintainable contrast to the large expanses of glazing. Stone detailing around the windows is as original, with some additional stonework added on the new gable — it looks entirely as if it has always been there. Rather than reclad the whole roof, additional concrete (round-topped) tiles were sourced from a local reclamation yard to blend back in with the ones already on the house. “It would have been nice to have slate,” explains Jon, “but budget was important.”

Inside, the significant remodel is obvious: the extended entrance hall gives generous circulation space, which then opens up to a large, airy open plan kitchen, dining and living space, all enjoying views over the river. It’s very white, very clean and very simple, with just a single orange pillar as an indication of the original layout. There are a couple of guest bedrooms and a bathroom too. Up ▶

“It’s amazing how [homes like these] can be turned into something interesting with relatively little in the way of intervention”





Remodelled

The new open plan ground floor enjoys a significant boost in light thanks to the south-facing glazing (the windows are from Glass Consultants UK Ltd). The existing roof tiles (LEFT) were retained, and a small extension fills the gap between the two gables of the original house. Most impressively, two modern, bespoke dormers enable the first floor bedroom to be much more generous in size





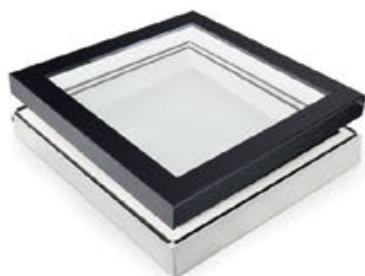
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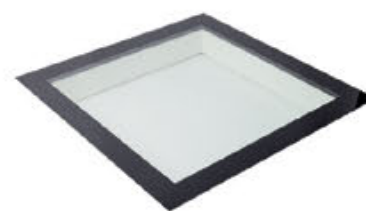
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Added Space

One of the cleverest elements of the project is how extra living space has been squeezed out of the existing home with minimal additional building. The first floor bedroom (RIGHT) is now very luxurious. A garden boathouse (TOP RIGHT) was used for accommodation during building work and is now a useful annexe

a new solid oak staircase – purposefully narrow to ensure room to move around it in the internal hallway – the master bedroom feels light despite its low ceiling heights (one of the dormers above the staircase ensures 2m head height clearance for Building Regulations compliance). There’s a clever and surprisingly generous shower in the en suite (built right into the roof space). Three rooflights in the flat roof valley (between the two gables) give plenty of light to the open plan living area too.

The build was run off a JCT Homeowner Contract between the main contractor and Angie, with Jon supervising at regular intervals and detailing key design elements. Inside is very much a collaboration, with Angie specifying the kitchen and most of the finishes. Extra little touches make the home special, such as the chamfered window reveals and a beautiful picture window which frames the views of the hills to the east.

“I really feel like we have pushed the house into the 21st century,” continues Jon. “Actually, working with these types of houses is very nice for an architect. They have plenty of interesting forms and lots to work with — they’re well-built and usually very light. It’s amazing how they can be turned into something very interesting with relatively little in the way of intervention.” ■



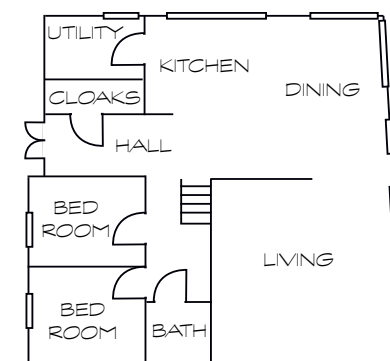
Floorplans

By removing and replacing the internal walls, the bungalow has now been opened up to make the most of the available space. Extending the hallway has allowed for a large circulation area with an open plan kitchen/dining/living space and separate utility and cloakroom. To the other side of the ground floor are two guest bedrooms and a bathroom. A new staircase leads to the enlarged master bedroom, which also includes an en suite.

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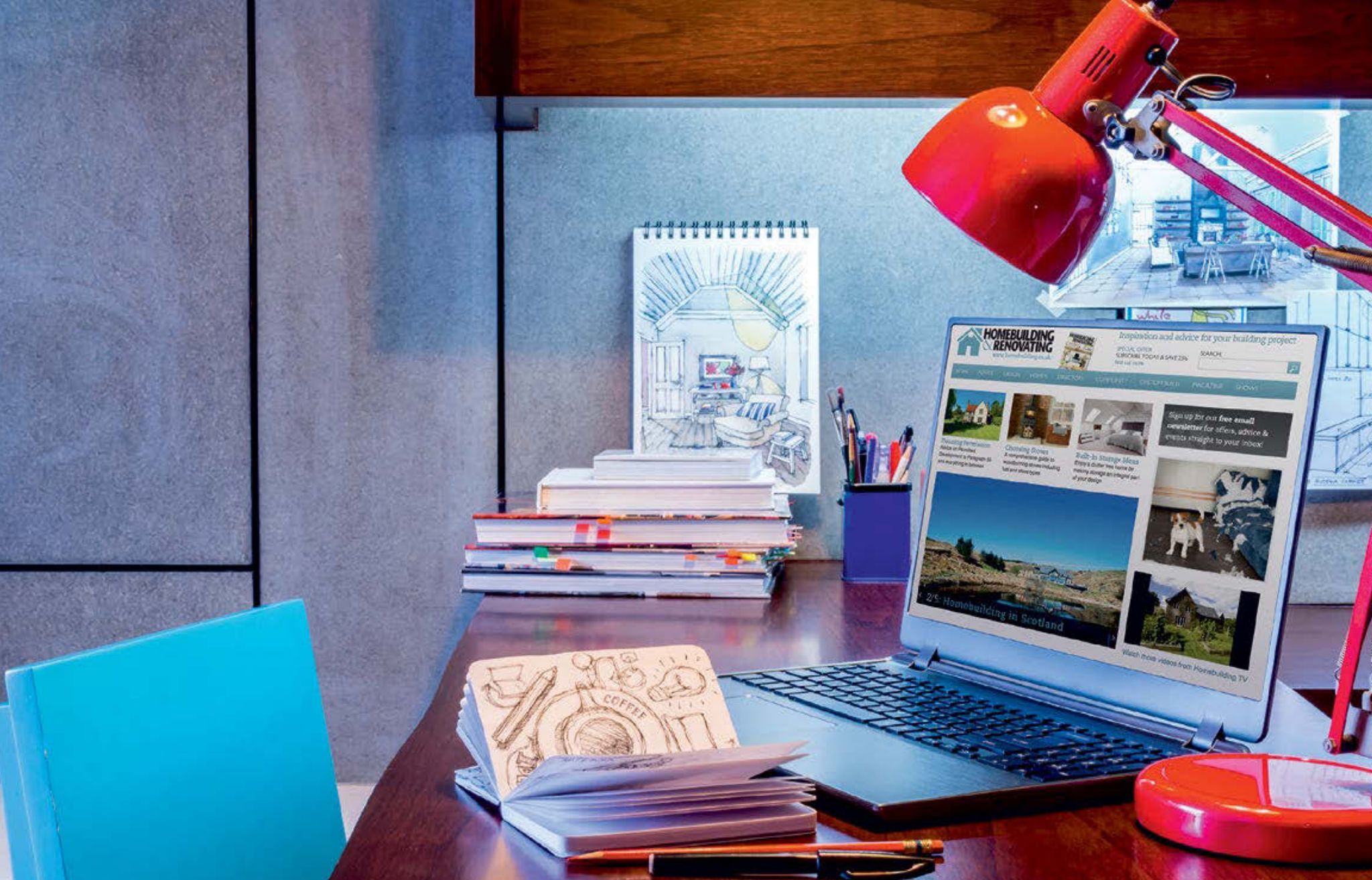


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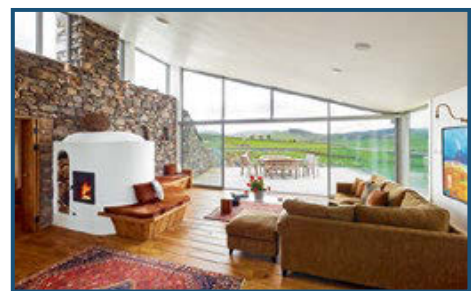
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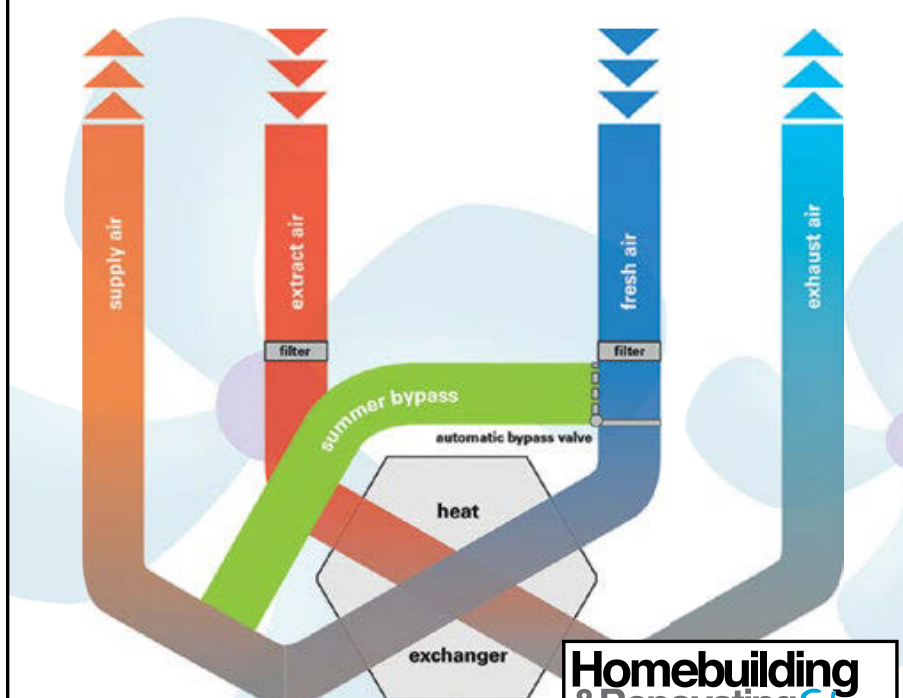
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The Pros and Cons of **EXTERNAL WALL INSULATION**

Insulating the outside of your external walls needn't just be a last resort for those with solid walls. **Tim Pullen** explains the benefits and issues

A wall does many things, only one of which is to hold the roof up. Since the 1970s the wall's role in keeping the heat in has become increasingly important. And, following numerous grants rolled out for cavity insulation, 2014 saw the Government offer grants towards both internal and external wall insulation in the form of the Green Deal. But no form of wall insulation, including external wall insulation, is without its challenges — not least of which is dealing with moisture.

MOISTURE PENETRATION

The potential exists for moisture to enter a wall from both sides: rain on the external skin and moisture from people and the activities they undertake (cooking, drying clothes, washing, breathing, etc.) on the internal skin.

Prior to the widespread introduction of the cavity wall, the housebuilder generally had a choice to build either an impermeable wall that stops moisture penetration to both surfaces, or to build a breathing wall that allows moisture to penetrate (to a degree) and be evaporated away. A solid brick wall will tend to be the former and a stone wall will tend to be the latter. The cavity wall by comparison is an impermeable wall in that the cavity is intended to form a 'barrier' to prevent moisture penetration; any rainwater entering the wall is evaporated away by air movement in the cavity.

Many modern insulation materials are usually non-permeable and will be rendered or clad to prevent rainwater penetration. However, they do not stop moisture reaching the internal surface of the wall from people and what they do — and that can mean that more ventilation is needed in the house to remove the moist air before it gets to the walls.

DEW POINT

The dew point is the point where air meets a temperature that causes the moisture to condense out of the air as water. The temperature will change through a wall as



Insulating Old Homes Externally

External wall insulation will inevitably change the façade of a house — often for the better when it comes to homes clad in ugly and/or old render or brickwork. Window and door reveals and the eaves are details which need careful consideration too

it moves from the outside ambient temperature to the internal temperature. Ideally the dew point will occur either on the external surface of the wall, where moisture can evaporate away, or in the ventilated cavity (if the wall has a cavity), where the same thing happens. In most cases, it is slightly inside the external surface.

Adding insulation to a wall will change the place where the dew point occurs. The effect of external insulation is to warm the wall and this in turn moves the dew point outwards, towards the colder external air, thereby reducing the risk of condensation appearing on the internal surface.

There is, however, a danger that the dew point will occur between the insulation and the wall, or actually in the insulation. Most external insulation systems deal with this challenge through the inclusion of a vapour barrier between the wall and the insulation, but it is worth checking with your manufacturer/supplier. ►

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Cork Insulation

One material which is gaining traction in the world of external wall insulation is cork. Systems like SecilVit CORK – free from chemicals, synthetic resins and carcinogenic materials – provide a breathable solution. This property (LEFT) has been insulated with this product externally and rendered in ecoCORK lime render – all from Ty-Mawr (lime.org.uk)



SOLID STONE WALLS

Solid stone walls tend not to be ‘solid’ at all. They usually have a rubble-filled ‘cavity’ between two stone skins. The natural dew point will be between that ‘cavity’ and the external surface, where any moisture can either fall out of the wall to the ground or evaporate away. External insulation has no great impact on this. The dew point will move a little further outwards and any internal moisture penetrating the wall can still be dealt with within the wall.

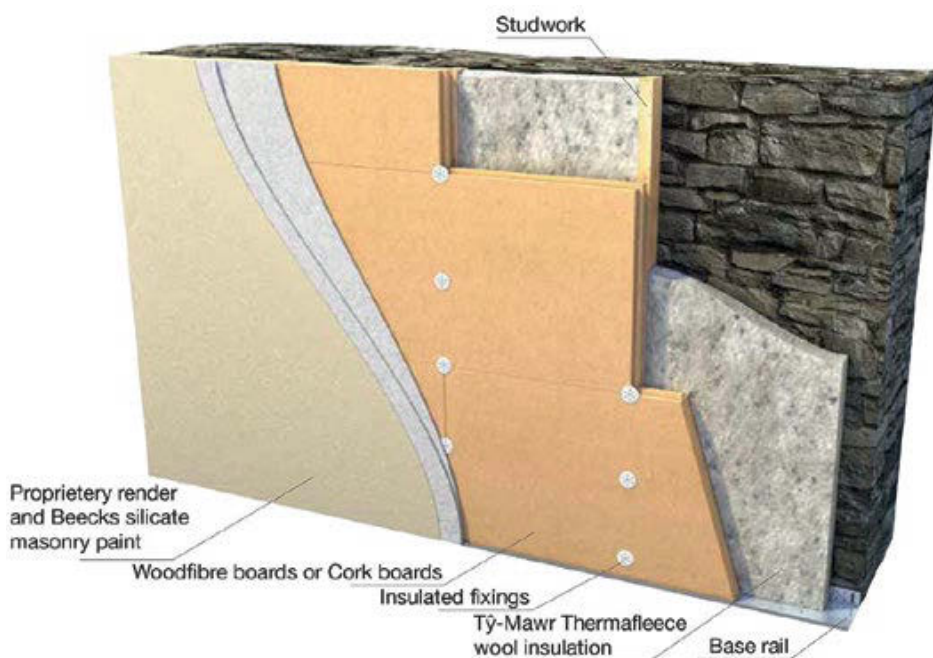
However, stone walls tend to be breathing walls and maintaining this breathability ensures that the wall continues to operate as designed. In this case, using a breathable insulation – wood fibre, cork or the like – with a lime external render makes good sense. One ideal solution would be a 90mm layer of wood fibre board – Diffutherm, Pavatex or similar – mechanically fixed to the wall. These materials are ready to accept render. A 20mm thickness of hemp-lime render would be applied in two 10mm coats. The hemp-lime can be coloured to suit or painted with a lime wash.

An alternative would be a 70mm rigid foam insulation (Kingspan, Celotex or similar) again mechanically fixed to the wall and then clad with a sand and cement render, timber cladding or whatever other weatherproof layer is preferred. This option will be considerably cheaper but means the wall is no longer breathable — which may or may not matter. If the wall is in good condition and there is no sign of damp penetration, and the interior is well ventilated, then turning it into a non-breathable wall will have little impact.

SOLID BRICK WALLS

The quality and permeability of bricks varies widely. Spalling – where the surface of a brick flakes off – is a fairly common sight and an indication of freeze-thaw, whereby moisture penetrates the brick, freezes, and in turn leads to this flaking.

As with stone, adding external insulation will have little impact on the performance of the wall (except its thermal performance, of course). In this case a brick ►



External Wall Insulation

wall is not a breathable wall and therefore any of the rigid foam insulations will suit. As with stone walls, the insulation can be mechanically fixed to the wall and clad with render, timber, etc.

CAVITY WALLS

In cavity wall construction, the cavity will (almost certainly) be ventilated — it is how it does its job as a cavity. But that does mean that heat from the house penetrating the internal skin to the cavity will be exhausted into the atmosphere by that ventilation. That then makes any external insulation almost useless as most of the heat has been lost before it gets to the insulation.

If cavity-fill insulation fails (and there are plenty of stories of it failing) it is because the insulation allows rainwater to penetrate across the cavity. In this case, external insulation with a weatherproof render will prevent the rainwater entering the wall and subsequently makes cavity-fill insulation a useful thermal barrier. Splitting the necessary thickness of insulation between cavity-fill and external is a sensible idea. The cavity will typically be 50mm wide; add 20mm external insulation, in the same way as for solid walls, and the wall will achieve a good U value.

REVEALS, CILLS AND EAVES

External insulation will add thickness to the wall, most evident at the reveals and eaves. Eaves width can be a deal-breaker in that if the eaves are not wide enough to accept the insulation, the cost of extending the eaves can outweigh the benefit of the insulation. Whether cills fall into the same category will depend on the width and type of cill, and the cost involved in moving or extending it.

In addition, it is usually impractical to return the insulation into window and door reveals, as there is seldom sufficient door or window frame width to comfortably accommodate the external insulation. Not insulating the reveal will leave a significant cold bridge, negating a good proportion of the value of the insulation. There are thin insulation options, like Spacetherm aerogel from the Proctor Group, that, at 10mm thick, can be used on a reveal to help overcome this challenge.

U VALUES

A 225mm solid brick wall will have a U value of around 1.20W/m². A 450mm stone wall will be virtually the same, and a brick cavity wall about 1.50W/m². The requirement under Building Regulations is to reduce that to no more than 0.30W/m². That means:

● CAVITY WALL

50mm injected foam cavity-fill plus 20mm PUR external gives 0.28W/m².

● SOLID WALL

100mm EPS gives 0.31W/m²;

70mm rigid foam gives 0.30W/m²;

110mm mineral wool, wood fibre, hemp batts gives 0.30W/m².

COSTS

The cost will be higher than internal insulation. A three bedroom semi is likely to cost £5,000–£9,000, with a larger detached home in the region of £8,000–£15,000. There are proprietary systems that require specialist installation, but there are also materials from builders' merchants that are a lot cheaper. Whichever is used there will be a cost involved in erecting scaffolding and removing/replacing all the pipes and cables that are fixed to the wall that cannot be avoided.

EPS INSULATION

Jablite's EPS (expanded polystyrene) Dynamic External product for retrofit external wall insulation applications (jablite.co.uk)

IS PLANNING REQUIRED?

Whatever else external insulation does, it will change the external appearance of the house. In most cases that will mean gaining planning consent before undertaking the work, so do check with your local authority from the outset. For homes in Conservation Areas and for listed buildings it is quite possible that consent will not be forthcoming.

Under Building Regulations, if 25 per cent or more of a wall is to be insulated externally, it is typically necessary to bring the entire wall up to current standards — which makes sense in that, if you're going to go to the efforts and expense of insulating externally, then you may as well do it well. The thermal performance of the insulated wall must have a U value of no more than 0.30 (see BELOW LEFT).

IS IT AN OPTION WORTH PURSUING?

So, in summary, there are a number of issues to be addressed prior to installing external wall insulation, but the benefits are numerous, including:

- Reducing heat loss and energy bills;
- Reducing draughts and increasing the sense of comfort;
- It does not disrupt the house while being installed;
- It does not reduce internal floor area;
- It allows walls to contribute to thermal mass (the 'tea cosy' effect);
- It improves weatherproofing and sound resistance;
- It increases the life of the wall;
- It reduces condensation on internal walls.

External wall insulation is expensive but effective. Adding it as part of a larger project will reduce the cost, plus it does not need to be done to the whole house; an attractive front elevation may be more suitable to internal insulation, while less attractive side and rear elevations can be insulated externally. But even with the higher cost, the advantages external insulation offers over internal mean that it is difficult to disregard. ■



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David Snell

The Builder

Perhaps the single most important person on site (present company excluded), a builder can carry out a whole host of tasks on a domestic project. **David Snell** finds out exactly what a typical day brings



Bruce Bendall

A builder who has followed in his father's footsteps, Bruce has continued to enhance the family's reputation for good and honest work. He doesn't have fancy offices and much of his paperwork is done at the kitchen table or in the cab of his van, which means that his overheads are minimal. His two sons work with him from time to time and Bruce is quite capable of applying his skills to most of the trades. While he works mainly in the Forest of Dean area, he has undertaken work further afield.

This type of small builder is ideal for self-builders because one will always be dealing with the 'main man' and it undoubtedly means that the costs are going to be lower than with a larger builder who has to maintain offices and staff. But, by not having staff, it does mean that from time to time the builder will have to attend to other business, not least the sourcing and negotiation for their next job. The secret of success is, however, to maintain continuity on all of the various jobs that he may be undertaking at any one time.

● **Bruce Bendall: 01594 841083; 07894 529422**



8.35am - Bruce arrives on site to discuss a forthcoming job

8.35am

Bruce is on his way to check up on a forthcoming job and find out when the client will be ready for him.

9.00am

The client, a farmer, is demolishing an old farmhouse, taking off the roof tiles and setting the stone aside for use on a proposed new house. The groundworkers will start work on site as soon as demolition work finishes. In turn, Bruce will begin work on the proposed house in the winter, after the foundations are in. In the interim, the farmer needs an electrician in order to move the power supply; Bruce provides him with the name and number of a local contact.

Bruce also agrees to retiling one of the barns on the farm using the tiles sourced from the old farmhouse. He'll do this next week.

9.43am

Bruce arrives at the site of a new build where he and his son Ed are helping a self-builder with the timber



9.43am - Measuring up for the weatherboarding



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cladding. It's a contemporary house being self-built by a chap called John. It has a flat green roof and projecting cantilevered balconies to the upper storey, which will house the living accommodation. The house has been built entirely on site using timber frame and will be clad in Siberian larch shiplap weatherboarding, which will be left unpainted to silver naturally.

Bruce sets up the laser level and marks the timber frame at several points. From these datum marks, he then marks the shiplap courses up the frame using a gauge rod. This preparatory work will enable them to install the boards all the way round the building and match up when they reach the other side.

They'll be fixing the boards using stainless steel ring shank nails through the top of the boards only, so that each nail is masked by the next board.

10.16am

The building has quite a complex shape and not all of the corners are right angles. This means that, on external corners, they'll have to have a corner fillet



10.51am - The board ends are cut using the chop saw

and this will have to be made to suit each different angle. John and Bruce discuss the issue and decide that internal angles will be mitred.

10.30am

The first cuts are made: Bruce uses the crosscut saw to cut boards and to cut one end at the correct mitred angle. Meanwhile John is getting on with fixing the vertical counterbattens to carry the boards.

10.51am

Ed goes off to make a round of tea. Bruce meanwhile uses the chop saw to cut the straight ends of the boards to the right length.

11.10am

Ed brings back the tea and John gets out a cake that his wife has made. The men take a quick break.



10.30am - Bruce begins to cut the timber boards ready to clad this timber frame self-build

11.30am

Bruce fixes the first boards and then starts to cut eight more to finish the section he's working on. With Ed back, one chop saw is set up for the angled cuts and the other for the straight cuts. When there's enough to be getting on with, Bruce begins to fix the boards, leaving Ed to continue cutting the remainder.

12.10pm

Bruce calculates the new angles and lengths for the next section and sets Ed up cutting the boards.

12.53pm

Bruce wants to finish this next section of the build before they break for lunch.

1.14pm

Lunch is taken sitting on a pile of flooring insulation.

1.50pm

Having set up the laser once more and marked each course of boards, they return to chopping the boards. The gauge rod is too large to be used for the section of the build beneath the balcony, so Bruce measures this section with a tape. He then fixes the boards that Ed has already cut.

They reach a section above a window opening that requires Ed to cut a long board; Bruce gives him the correct measurements.



11.30am - Bruce fixes the timber boards

A Day in the Life



1.50pm - Lunch finished, Bruce resumes work by measuring up the boards on a single storey element of the build

2.40pm

They cut a long board for the head of the window at an angle so as to create a drip. They've spaced the boards so that they'll always have at least half a board, and the long board fits perfectly. But, before nailing it, Bruce has to cut some small lengths of batten to brace behind the board.

3.20pm

Bruce sets Ed up cutting the boards for the next section and then talks to John; he's already told him that he'll have to leave site to meet another client to price



3.30pm - Discussing the refurb of an industrial unit



12.53pm - Finishing up the wall before lunch



2.40pm - Cutting boards ready for installation around a window

up a job, but that he'll be back the following day to fix the boards that Ed will be cutting.

3.25pm

Bruce leaves site to go to his appointment at a nearby industrial estate.

3.30pm

The prospective clients are waiting; they're an events catering company who are taking on an industrial unit. They want a blockwork structure built at the rear of the unit to house their new kitchens, with space above for offices. Bruce advises that it will be both quicker and cheaper to build this addition in timber.

The clients also need hot water to supply two new sinks and have been thinking in terms of a gas combi boiler. Again, Bruce suggests that electric water heaters would be cheaper and easier to install.

Bruce and the clients discuss cladding for the new structure and the necessary staircase to the proposed office above the kitchen. Bruce agrees to go away and come back with a price.

4.15pm

That's as much as Bruce can usefully do for the day so he heads home to sit down and work out prices for the tiling of the barn on the farm site he visited earlier this morning, as well as the work to the industrial unit. ■



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Spotting Potential

Tony Holt

MODERN, MASTERED

A chalet bungalow in a sensitive location fails to make the most of its large plot. Step in designer **Tony Holt** who recommends a replacement dwelling to create a modern home



Tony Holt is an architectural designer and registered chartered architectural technologist, specialising in bespoke property design for a range of clients across the country, with his work focusing on both new builds and the remodelling of existing properties

● www.tonyholt-design.co.uk

THE EXISTING PROPERTY

The existing 150m² chalet bungalow sits on a large one-acre site in Dorset and presents a good opportunity to create a much larger property on site. The overall size of the existing bungalow does not relate proportionally to its plot, and the majority of the properties in this area are much larger dwellings, predominantly between 232m² and 557m².

The property is located within a sensitive area which seeks to prevent any new development looking incongruous amongst the existing context — restricting the style and materials that could be used. There are also a number of protected trees on the site covered by a blanket TPO (Tree Preservation Order) which will restrict development.

The challenge here will be to create a large modern dwelling that sits comfortably on the plot and gains the local authority's support by utilising traditional forms incorporating similar materials used within the

surrounding area. Due to the blanket TPO it is likely that the positioning of the new house will have to be similar to the existing, and the orientation of the property will need careful consideration.

THE SOLUTION

With the need to produce a traditional form, the new floorplan will be loosely based on a 6m grid which will suit a load-bearing masonry structure utilising a wide-span concrete first floor. The replacement dwelling will be positioned in a similar location to the existing; this will ensure the root protection zones of nearby trees are avoided too.

In order to create a property with strong kerb appeal, a wide front elevation with projecting bays will be introduced to generate large spacious rooms and allow a gabled frontage to be created with primary ridges running back to front. The ground floor rooms will be arranged in three bays across the footprint with a games

room, gym complete with shower, and a WC situated in the left-hand bay, a large double-height entrance hall and dining area stretching the full depth of the house with views out to the rear occupying the middle bay, with a formal living room and an open plan kitchen/dining/

The primary living spaces now respond to the orientation of the plot as much as possible

family space occupying the right-hand bay. This space will also project beyond the rear elevation — which also benefits from the south-west orientation — and will feature full-height glazed openings. The doors can be opened up to terraced areas, ideal for entertaining. An attached garage, utility and boot room will be





located in a wing built off the main two storey element.

The new first floor will be served by a large galleried landing which will wrap around to the front to provide a casual seating area looking out to the east. The floorplan will provide four large double bedrooms (all en suite), a study, and a separate family bathroom, with an additional fifth bedroom and en suite located above the garage. The master bedroom will benefit from a large walk-through dressing area into a luxury en suite.

Externally the architectural detailing will be modern, but with materials common to the local area to appease the local authority. Rendered external walls will therefore be introduced along with powder-coated aluminium windows and a natural slate roof. The use of natural stone will also help break up the elevations. The architectural detailing will be simple and clean without decoration, giving this traditional form a modern feel.

A Home Transformed

By overcoming the site's constraints and replacing the existing chalet bungalow, the homeowners can now enjoy a property that boasts spacious rooms with cleverly designated accommodation within three bays. Thanks to its orientation, the home also makes the most of the south-west sunlight in the primary living spaces

THE VERDICT

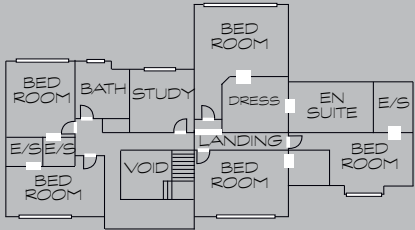
The replacement dwelling now provides 550m² of luxury accommodation, which is much more on par with surrounding properties. While planning constraints dictated a traditional form and traditional building materials, a modern house has been created by applying these materials to the envelope using modern techniques. Although the repositioning of the new house was restricted, the primary living spaces respond to the orientation of the plot as much as possible in order to create good-quality internal spaces which make the best use of the opportunities presented by the site. ■

THE FIGURES

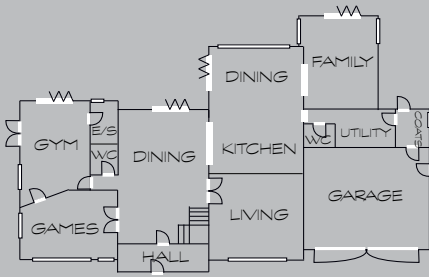
Current Value: £450,000
Estimated Project Cost: £660,000
New Estate Agent Valuation: £1.4million

The Redesign

FIRST FLOOR



GROUND FLOOR



- Replacement dwelling
- Increased kerb appeal
- Open plan living accommodation
- Double-height entrance hall
- Galleried landing
- Designated accommodation
- Mixed palette of building materials to exterior façade
- Footprint increased



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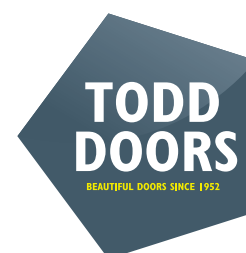
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Ask the Expert

Kris Gamble

SMART HOME SOLUTIONS

Your Questions Answered

Smart home technology is rapidly becoming a must-have in not just new but existing homes.

Kris Gamble, Director of Customised Ltd, gives his tips for achieving these solutions in your home

Can installing smart home technology really have a positive impact on the way you live?

There are three key positive aspects for installing smart home systems:

- Saving energy — home technology can reduce your energy bills for heating, lighting and electrical appliance energy consumption.

- Comfort and convenience — smart home systems are able to learn your habits for heating, lighting and entertainment purposes. What can be more convenient than being able to bundle that up in a mobile app which gives you complete control when you're at home or away.

- Security — home technology can be used to alert you when there is a fire or smoke detected and guide you to a safe exit. Intruders can also be captured on high-definition (HD) cameras with snapshots sent to your mobile devices. You can even get alerts from your home when the kids return home from school or if a burst pipe is detected.

How can smart home technology be controlled; what is the most effective solution?

Mobile devices such as tablets and smartphones have become the default controller of smart home technology. Apps produced by companies like Sonos, Savant and Nest have made controlling your

home a great experience. Control with mobile devices means you have control in the home but more importantly away from home too. There's option to control your heating, check your security camera, unlock the door for a delivery and turn off an electrical appliance using a smartphone or tablet.

However, the very nature of a mobile device means that you often need some form of backup for scenarios like having no battery or use by others (i.e. children). So light switches and on-wall keypads are still essential. In addition, the most recent trend is the use of sensors for lighting — walk in and lights on, walk out, lights off; great for hallways, utility rooms or garages, etc.

What are the most popular solutions available to homeowners on a budget?

Budget-friendly pricing definitely brings popularity. Multi-room audio is now easily achievable in any home and brands such as Sonos and Denon have systems which start from under £200, sound terrific and often do not need professional installation. Intelligent heating control using smart thermostats from the likes of Nest and Honeywell are reducing household energy bills by learning your habits and only heating spaces when required, and they typically



About the Expert

Kris Gamble is the Director of Customised Ltd who have over 10 years' experience designing, supplying and installing bespoke residential and commercial AV and network systems (customised).
uk.com; 01508 528964

cost under £200. Both smart heating controls and multi-room audio are great means of introducing smart home technology on a budget.

How simple - or difficult - is it to retrofit smart home technology into existing homes?

Audio systems and heating controllers are definitely both retrofit-friendly solutions — in fact many are sold as DIY retrofit solutions. Other DIY systems pitched at the tech-savvy homeowner include lighting from companies such as Philips Hue or LIFX. By swapping your old light bulbs for smart bulbs you can also have long-lasting, energy-saving LED bulbs with colour changing and smartphone controllable scene-setting features.

If you wish to have in-ceiling speakers, however, for your new audio system then cables are required and this is hard to avoid. A professional installer will be able to advise you on the best option for



your cabled connections. Alternatives to in-ceiling speakers would be wall-mounted speakers or even speakers which are hidden behind plaster or behind artwork.

What are the main ways of achieving a home lighting scheme?

Retrofit smart bulbs are great, however costs can mount up if you are going to be installing them in multiple rooms. Another solution is to have a lighting system from the likes of Lutron, Rako, HDL UK or Control4; they ideally need to be professionally installed. All offer whole-house lighting control and management that combines scene-setting, energy-saving, and security features like simulating somebody is home. Many professionally installed systems which offer lighting control can also provide other features like intelligent, zoned heating control, multi-room music and television operation, curtain and blind automation and security elements like

Smart Solutions, Smart Home

From home cinema set-ups to multi-room audio and whole-house security, there are endless possibilities where smart home technology can be introduced in the home, with the ease of being controlled from tablets and smartphones

CCTV and smart door locks. By choosing a multi-feature system you will have energy-saving benefits, future expandability and single-app whole-house control.

How can you achieve a multi-room audio system which plays music in different rooms around the house?

This is relatively easy and is something you can do without having to rely on the professional installers or even needing to run cables. Plug-and-play solutions using your home Wi-Fi enable you to interconnect devices and play music wirelessly throughout the home. Seek out market-leading, multi-room music solutions from key manufacturers/suppliers such as Denon, Sonos and Samsung. You will also be able to have full control of these systems from your smartphone or tablet.

What about home cinema systems — what should you consider first?

When installing a home cinema set-up, space is a big factor — have you got room for a 200-inch projector screen and rows of seating? In most cases the answer will be no. Don't worry — a professional installer can still provide a cinema-like experience in your home.

An entry-level home cinema can be based around your existing wide-

screen TV: paired up with a soundbar and subwoofer you'll instantly upgrade the sound of your movies and sporting events. A multi-speaker system with projector and screen is best suited to a new build or renovation project due to the cabling requirement, but the benefits are vast. Room-shaking bass and immersive surround-sound from these will be able to transport your family into big-screen adventures that will only need popcorn to rival the experience of the local multiplex. A professional installer really is a must and will be able to specify the right system for your space and for your budget.

Do you need to allocate space for housing all of the equipment or can this be done more discreetly?

For larger installations there is a lot of control and distribution equipment which is hard to avoid. Normally, an understairs or hallway cupboard can house this equipment. You can locate items such as amplifiers, set-top boxes, DVD players and games consoles in this area to leave rooms clutter-free, with just your flatscreen TV mounted on the wall.

To get glorious high-definition (HD) or 4K (ultra-HD) for your televisions you will need cable, but not as many as you think. HDBaseT is a technology that delivers HD/4K picture, surround-sound audio, internet connection, remote-control signals and power over just one single cable.

The cable most commonly used for smart home technology is known as Category 6 and is no different from the one which connects your broadband router to your computer. This affordable cable is a must for all new build or renovation projects to provide a future-ready connection to every room in the house and allows you to have a HDTV distribution system from companies such as Wyrestorm installed with ease. ■

Space is a big factor — have you got room for a 200-inch projector screen and rows of seating?

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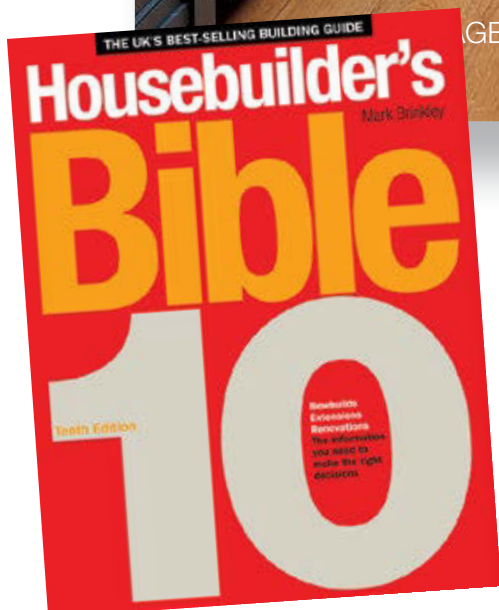
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ESSENTIALS

EXPERT ADVICE

How Do I Get Started?

Find and Assess Your Opportunity

Plots in the right area and at the right price are not easy to come by. Equally, houses in need of renovation need assessment to ensure they can be turned into the home you envisage. Use specialist plotfinding agencies (such as plotfinder.net) to get an idea of the building plots currently available in your area. You will then need to assess the plot or house from a planning, legal, design and structural point of view to see if it's right for you. A survey is also a wise investment when buying a plot, or house to renovate.

MORE: plotfinder.net

Decide on a Build Route

Self-build is not, as the name suggests, something that relies on good DIY skills. In fact, less than 1 in 10 projects are managed this way; the majority are either handled by a 'package' supplier, a main contractor/builder, or carried out by subcontractors directly managed by the homeowner. The chief skills required are organisation, management and vision — plus lots of determination. **MORE:** homebuilding.co.uk/buildroute

Find a Designer

Good design not only ensures the house best meets your needs, but also maximises value. Design fees vary — designers can charge fixed fees for small, packageable design work, charge on a time basis, or charge a proportion of the contract cost. Interview a handful of recommended local designers, who may or may not be architects. **MORE:** homebuilding.co.uk/designers

Get Planning and Building Regulations Approval

Once you have design drawings, you can submit your project for planning approval. Most new houses and large renovation projects will be decided by the local planning committee, while smaller schemes will be decided by powers delegated to the case planning officer. Once you have gained approval, you should then get detailed building drawings from your designer ready to submit for Building Regulations approval. **MORE:** planningportal.gov.uk

Find a Builder

Ideally you will have lined up a handful of local builders

during the early stages of the planning process. For each of them, you should meet former clients and/or see examples of previous work for peace of mind. The tender process involves putting together a document containing all of the project information (as detailed with your designer) and perhaps meeting them on site to discuss your plans further. They will then go away and estimate how much your project will cost, and get back to you with a quote.

MORE: homebuilding.co.uk/builders

Get Insured

As soon as you exchange contracts, arrange your insurance. Empty houses that need renovation, and building plots require specialist insurance to ensure that you are protected for public liability issues, as well as the usual issues of fire and so on.

All new houses and major renovations should also be guaranteed against structural defects in the form of a warranty, which lasts 10 years from the initial date of taking out the policy. **MORE:** homebuilding.co.uk/insurance

OUR PICK OF THE PLOTS



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SCOTTISH BORDERS

This building plot comes with planning permission and an enviable rural location. **£105,000**



HERTFORDSHIRE

A Grade II* listed 10-bay barn with planning and listed building consent to convert into a home. **£600,000**



COUNTY FERMANAGH

This building plot has outline planning permission for a new dwelling with detached garage. **£60,000**



INSIDER TIP:

“It is nearly always true that the simpler the plan, the better the building. Too many plans end up getting complicated”

CHARLIE LUXTON, DESIGNER AND TV PRESENTER

BUILD COSTS

How Much Will it All Cost?

Top Build Project Tips

Do your homework: when hiring trades, speak to previous clients and see examples of their work.

Never pay for work in advance — if the builder has a good credit rating, materials can be paid for at the end of the month.

Establish the terms of the contract so everyone is on the same page.

One of the most important aspects when planning your self-build or home renovation/extension project is working out how much it is going to cost.

This figure will depend on the size and shape of the house, the level of your own involvement and how much work you delegate to the professionals, where in the country you intend to build and the materials you're going to use. If you can make even rough decisions about these factors, then you can begin to work out how much it is going to cost.

As a very general rule of thumb, expect a building plot to cost between a third and a half of the end value of the finished house. The costs of building a house will then depend on the variables listed above. All building work is usually quoted on a cost/m² basis. For example, a typical

new four bedroom self-built home is around 200m² (with 100m² on two storeys) and usually varies between £900-£1,500/m² (although self-builders achieve costs between £300-£3,000/m²).

Renovation costs are more difficult to establish as they involve many variables, but allow at least £1,000-£1,300/m² for work. This, added to the cost of the plot/house and with a 10-30% contingency, should result in less than the final end value of the house.

The table below, based on information from the Build Cost Information Service (part of RICS), has been helping self-build beginners get an idea of their potential costs for many years. It is updated monthly to help you work out a more accurate estimate (note, however, that these figures are for build costs only and do not account for VAT, which is not charged for self-build projects).

Interactive Calculator Online

Visit homebuilding.co.uk/calculator for a fully interactive calculator to get your full build costs in an instant. It's easy to use and you can use it over and over again

HOW TO USE THE TABLE

1. Identify your build route from the four options.
2. Identify your expected level of specification: 'standard', 'good' or 'excellent'.
3. Identify the estimated size of your finished house (either single or two/more storeys).
4. Choose your location.
5. Multiply the figure by your house size (the internal floor area).

The Homebuilding & Renovating Build Cost Table

| | | BUILD ROUTE A (DIY + Subbies) | | | BUILD ROUTE B (Subbies) | | | BUILD ROUTE C (Builder/Subbies) | | | BUILD ROUTE D (Main Contractor) | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------------|------|-----------|----------------------------|------|-----------|------------------------------------|------|-----------|------------------------------------|------|-----------|
| | | Standard | Good | Excellent | Standard | Good | Excellent | Standard | Good | Excellent | Standard | Good | Excellent |
| SINGLE STOREY | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| >90m ² | Greater London | 1175 | 1359 | 1634 | 1244 | 1439 | 1730 | 1313 | 1519 | 1827 | 1382 | 1599 | 1923 |
| | South-East | 1030 | 1192 | 1433 | 1091 | 1262 | 1518 | 1151 | 1332 | 1602 | 1212 | 1403 | 1687 |
| | NW, SW, East & Scotland | 937 | 1085 | 1304 | 992 | 1149 | 1381 | 1047 | 1213 | 1458 | 1102 | 1276 | 1534 |
| | Mids, Yorks, NE & Wales | 896 | 1037 | 1247 | 949 | 1098 | 1320 | 1001 | 1159 | 1394 | 1054 | 1220 | 1467 |
| 91-160m ² | Greater London | 1076 | 1305 | 1696 | 1139 | 1382 | 1796 | 1202 | 1459 | 1896 | 1265 | 1536 | 1995 |
| | South-East | 944 | 1144 | 1487 | 999 | 1212 | 1575 | 1055 | 1279 | 1662 | 1110 | 1346 | 1750 |
| | NW, SW, East & Scotland | 859 | 1042 | 1354 | 909 | 1103 | 1434 | 960 | 1164 | 1514 | 1010 | 1226 | 1593 |
| | Mids, Yorks, NE & Wales | 821 | 996 | 1295 | 870 | 1055 | 1371 | 918 | 1113 | 1447 | 966 | 1172 | 1523 |
| 161m ² + | Greater London | 958 | 1256 | 1576 | 1014 | 1330 | 1669 | 1070 | 1404 | 1761 | 1127 | 1478 | 1854 |
| | South-East | 840 | 1101 | 1382 | 889 | 1166 | 1464 | 939 | 1231 | 1545 | 988 | 1296 | 1626 |
| | NW, SW, East & Scotland | 764 | 1002 | 1259 | 809 | 1061 | 1333 | 854 | 1120 | 1407 | 899 | 1179 | 1481 |
| | Mids, Yorks, NE & Wales | 730 | 959 | 1203 | 773 | 1015 | 1273 | 816 | 1072 | 1344 | 859 | 1128 | 1415 |
| TWO STOREY | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 90-130m ² | Greater London | 1130 | 1308 | 1606 | 1197 | 1385 | 1701 | 1263 | 1462 | 1795 | 1330 | 1538 | 1890 |
| | South-East | 992 | 1147 | 1409 | 1050 | 1214 | 1492 | 1108 | 1282 | 1575 | 1167 | 1349 | 1658 |
| | NW, SW, East & Scotland | 902 | 1044 | 1283 | 955 | 1105 | 1359 | 1008 | 1167 | 1434 | 1061 | 1228 | 1510 |
| | Mids, Yorks, NE & Wales | 862 | 999 | 1226 | 913 | 1057 | 1298 | 963 | 1116 | 1370 | 1014 | 1175 | 1442 |
| 131-220m ² | Greater London | 952 | 1153 | 1462 | 1008 | 1220 | 1548 | 1064 | 1288 | 1634 | 1120 | 1356 | 1720 |
| | South-East | 835 | 1011 | 1282 | 884 | 1071 | 1357 | 934 | 1130 | 1433 | 983 | 1190 | 1508 |
| | NW, SW, East & Scotland | 759 | 920 | 1167 | 804 | 975 | 1235 | 849 | 1029 | 1304 | 893 | 1083 | 1372 |
| | Mids, Yorks, NE & Wales | 727 | 880 | 1115 | 770 | 931 | 1181 | 812 | 983 | 1246 | 855 | 1035 | 1312 |
| 221m ² + | Greater London | 878 | 1125 | 1412 | 930 | 1191 | 1495 | 982 | 1257 | 1578 | 1033 | 1323 | 1661 |
| | South-East | 771 | 986 | 1239 | 816 | 1044 | 1312 | 862 | 1102 | 1385 | 907 | 1160 | 1457 |
| | NW, SW, East & Scotland | 701 | 897 | 1127 | 742 | 950 | 1193 | 784 | 1003 | 1259 | 825 | 1055 | 1326 |
| | Mids, Yorks, NE & Wales | 671 | 857 | 1078 | 710 | 908 | 1141 | 750 | 958 | 1205 | 789 | 1009 | 1268 |

FIGURES UPDATED 27/10/14; DO NOT INCLUDE VAT

SPOTLIGHT ON...



The Party Wall Act

The Party Wall Act was put in place to determine permitted works between neighbouring properties, but what's involved?

What is the Party Wall Act?

The Party Wall Act permits certain specific building work being carried out to shared walls or within close proximity to neighbouring properties, while protecting the interests of anyone else who might be affected by that work. The Act serves to minimise any potential neighbourly disputes which might arise by ensuring homeowners notify neighbours in advance of the proposed works. If the adjoining owner does not agree to the works in writing then a surveyor will determine how the works will be carried out.

What is and is not covered?

Firstly, is it important to note which walls constitute as party walls — floors and ceilings between flats, shared boundary walls (i.e. between semis and terraced homes) and any other walls which touch the boundary are all covered. You will need to notify your neighbour if you intend to do any of the following to a party wall: cutting into a boundary wall to support a new beam, such as in a loft conversion; inserting a damp-proof course; increasing the thickness or demolishing and rebuilding a party wall; underpinning a party wall or part of a party wall; weathering the junction of adjoining walls. If you are building an extension, excavating foundations within three metres of a neighbour's structure and/or lower than its foundations, as well as building

a new wall up to or on the boundary, are also included. If you plan to undertake any work covered by the Act, then you'll also have to give 'Notice' of the commencement of work to your neighbour. Works which do not affect the structural integrity of the party wall and are not covered by the Act are: fixing plug sockets, screwing in units or shelving, adding or replacing wiring or sockets and replastering walls.

How do I give 'Notice'?

You must give written notice to any affected neighbours at least two months before starting any party wall works – or one month for 'line of junction' or excavation works – setting out your intentions. You will need to include key information, such as the date the Notice is served, the date work will commence, all parties' names and addresses and a description of the proposed work, along with a copy of the Act and explanatory booklet.

Your neighbour will then have 14 days to provide written approval or rejection. If they approve, your Notice will be valid for a year to complete the proposed work. If, however, they reject or do not respond within 14 days, then you're deemed to be in dispute.

Do I really need a Notice?

If things turn sour with your neighbour and they suspect that the work being carried out will adversely affect their

home, they can seek a court injunction to stop you from continuing. An approved Notice is the only way to prevent this.

What if the neighbours reject the Notice?

Talk to your neighbours first and explain your plans in detail to reach an agreement. If they still refuse then both parties will need to appoint an agreed surveyor to prepare a Party Wall Award. This 'Award' will determine the work to be carried out, how and when, will detail measures for preventing damage, as well as recording the current conditions of both properties so that work can be safely carried out. The Award will also determine who pays for the work if this is in dispute. The homeowner carrying out the work is usually the one who pays for all expenses of work and the reasonable costs, but these will be apportioned between the owners where appropriate and as advised by the surveyor. ■

SELF-BUILD BY NUMBERS

10,000

UK self-builds were built between July 2013-14

£255,543

is the average cost of a self-build (including land)

56%

of the total costs spent on materials (44% on labour)

13,000

plots currently for sale on the plotfinder.net database

97m²

is the average UK new-build house size

1 in 7

people in the UK want to build their own home

FROM THE ARCHIVE

An Oak Frame Eco Home

Ros and Mike Sayers' oak frame self-build on the Isle of Wight is more than just a beautiful home thanks to its eco benefits.

Designed by Oakwrights, the home blends modern and traditional elements with the exposed oak frame revealed throughout the open plan interiors, while the exterior façade is clad in a combination of stock-faced brickwork and horizontal oak boarding, finished with a Welsh slate roof.

The home also boasts excellent airtightness levels and a host of renewables.





BUILD COSTS

Where Do I Get Finance?

Access to funds can be difficult to come by, and so you should contact your regular lender first to see if they will entertain the idea of supporting your project. In the event that they don't lend on the type of project you're taking on, contact a mortgage broker who will have up-to-date information on lenders currently making funds available based on your circumstances. **You will be able to borrow up to 85% (in some cases 90%) of the land/house cost and up to the same levels for the building works.**

You will need to work out how much money you can afford to spend on your project in total (the cost of the build plot plus the cost of the build and contingency fund) before contacting a lender. In most cases, this budget will be a mix of private savings, any equity in your existing house, and additional borrowings from a mortgage lender.

If you have yet to sell your existing house, note that most self-build lenders will not entertain lending money to buy a plot if you're relying on the subsequent sale of your primary home to release funds. That means

you'll need to sell up first in order to get a self-build mortgage. However, lenders will be more flexible if you have a significant disposable income and/or savings that can cover the majority or all of a plot purchase.

HOW SELF-BUILD MORTGAGES WORK

A self-build mortgage is designed for the needs of a self-build project, with money drawn out in stages. Typically, the first stage is on completion of the purchase

Site Insurances

- **Self-Build Zone**
selfbuildzone.com
- **BuildStore**
buildstore.co.uk
- **ProAktive Selfbuild**
selfbuildonline.co.uk
- **NHBC**
nhbc.co.uk
- **Titan Insurance**
titan-insurance.com

Self-build Mortgage Lender Table

| LENDER | LTV LAND | LTV CONSTRUCTION | FINAL LTV |
|---|-------------|------------------|-----------|
| BM Solutions (bmsolutions.co.uk) | 75% | 75% | 75% |
| Chorley & District (0845 223 4888) | 85% | 85% | 80% |
| Cumberland BS (0800 032 3030) | 75% | 75% | 85% |
| Darlington BS (01325 366366) | 70% | 70% | 70% |
| Earl Shilton BS (01455 844422) | 50% | 75% | 75% |
| Ecology (0845 674 5566; eco homes only) | 90% | 90% | 90% |
| Halifax (0845 727 3747) | Not on land | 80% | 80% |
| Hanley Economic BS (0845 223 4888) | 75% | 75% | 75% |
| Hinckley & Rugby BS (0800 774 499) | Not on land | 80% | 80% |
| Holmesdale BS (01737 245716) | Not on land | 60% | 70% |
| Loughborough BS (01509 631950) | 75% | 75% | 75% |
| Mansfield BS (01623 676345) | 80% | 80% | 80% |
| Melton Mowbray BS (01664 414141) | Not on land | 75% | 75% |
| Monmouthshire BS* (0845 223 4888) | 85% | 85% | 80% |
| Newbury BS (01635 555777) | 66% | 75% | 75% |
| Newcastle BS (0845 606 4488) | 80% | 80% | 80% |
| Penrith BS (01768 863675) | 50% | 75% | 75% |
| Progressive BS (028 9024 4926) | Not on land | 70% | 75% |
| Saffron BS (0800 072 1100) | 65% | 75% | 75% |
| Scottish BS (0131 313 7700) | 80% | 80% | 80% |
| Ulster Bank (ulsterbank.com) | Not on land | 80% | 80% |
| Vernon BS (0161 429 6262) | 75% | 75% | 75% |

*For a full list of self-build mortgages, visit homebuilding.co.uk/self-build-mortgages

STEP BY STEP

Typical Build Schedule

MONTH ONE



1. Clear & Peg Site
Get surveys to work out levels and peg out site as per drawings

MONTH TWO



2. Foundations
Dig trenches and begin to build up the blockwork footings



3. Floor Structure
Finish footings and install ground floor slab or beam and block (as here)



4. Superstructure
Blocks or frame used to build external walls to first floor height

MONTH THREE



5. Second Lift
First floor structure installed, external walls continue to roof



6. Roof
Walls finished, roof structure installed and covered with slates or tiles



BEGINNER'S CLINIC

“We aim to buy a piece of land from our neighbour in order to undertake a self-build. However, the land is designated as a ‘landscape protection area’. What does this mean and do we have a chance of obtaining planning permission?”

of the building plot, and the subsequent stages are then released as the project progresses.

The amount you can borrow for a self-build mortgage will depend on the same factors that decide how much you can borrow for a regular house mortgage. In most cases, this amount will either be based on income multipliers (3-4 x single income; 1.5 x joint) or, more often, will be based on affordability factors (mortgage lenders will assess your regular monthly outgoings and your income, set against how much the monthly loan will cost to repay, and over how long).

This figure will then be assessed against loan-to-value (LTV) policies. These policies change weekly, however lenders will provide funding for up to 85% of the value of the plot and 85% of the value of the building project.

For specialist self-build mortgages, or if you want funds released in advance of the project's stages being completed, you will need to go through a specialist broker such as Build-Store. Regular arrears stage releases can also be found.

A landscape protection area is one of the many possible constraints you could come up against when trying to obtain planning permission for a piece of land. Green belt policy restricts the principle of development, making obtaining permission for a self-build where such a designation exists very unlikely.

However, within a landscape protection area, development can be permitted in principle if you are able to demonstrate that a new home would not have an adverse impact on the quality of the landscape or the character of the locality. In other words, a landscape protection area is a constraint, whereas a green belt

designation is much more of a fundamental barrier to development.

The scheme you propose will need to be well designed and sensitively located to ensure minimal impact on the site and surrounding area. The effect of traffic and domestic paraphernalia will also need to be considered, as will development control criteria such as the relationship of the site to the local settlement boundary, access and sustainability.

The key to achieving a home on this site will, therefore, be in putting together a well-thought out and robust planning and design case, that takes into account the surrounding area. ■

Know the Acronyms

- CAD**
Computer-aided design
- CIAT**
Chartered Institute of Architectural Technologists
- COP**
Coefficient of Performance
- DECC**
Department of Energy and Climate Change
- DPM**
Damp-proof membrane
- EPS**
Expanded polystyrene
- FiTs**
Feed-in Tariffs
- FMB**
Federation of Master Builders
- MVHR**
Mechanical ventilation heat recovery
- OSB**
Orientated strand board
- PD**
Permitted Development
- RHI**
Renewable Heat Incentive
- RICS**
Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors
- SAP**
Standard Assessment Procedure
- SIPS**
Structural insulated panels

MONTH FOUR



7. Weathertight
Windows, doors and soffits fitted to make house weathertight

MONTH FIVE



8. First Fix
Electrical and plumbing runs put in place — the stuff you won't see

MONTH SIX-EIGHT



9. Plastering
Usually a skim coat on top of plasterboard, after first fix complete



10. Second Fix
Connecting up the electrics and heating systems to include sockets

MONTH NINE

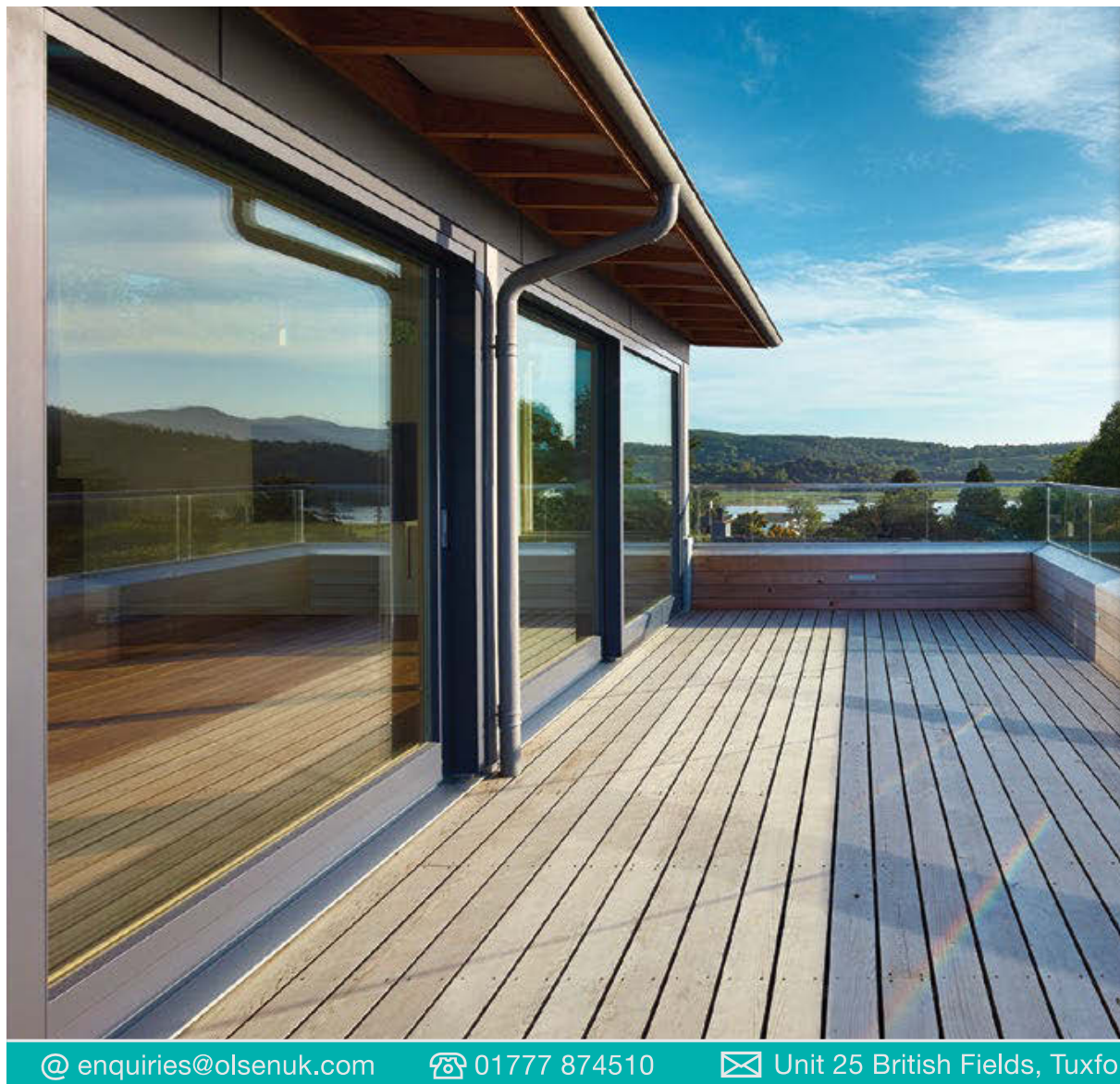


11. Fixtures
Kitchens and bathrooms in, flooring down, joinery complete

MONTH TEN



12. Snagging
Builders back to deal with any issues, final exterior finishes



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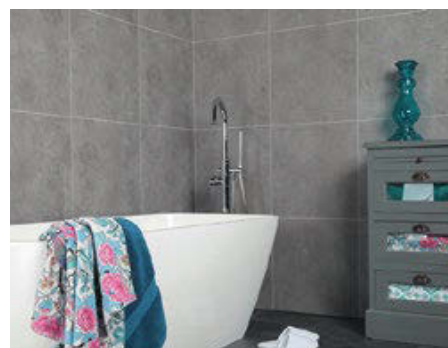
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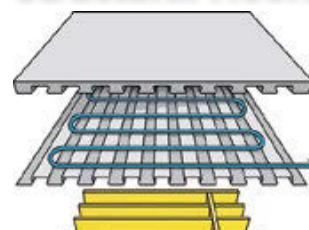
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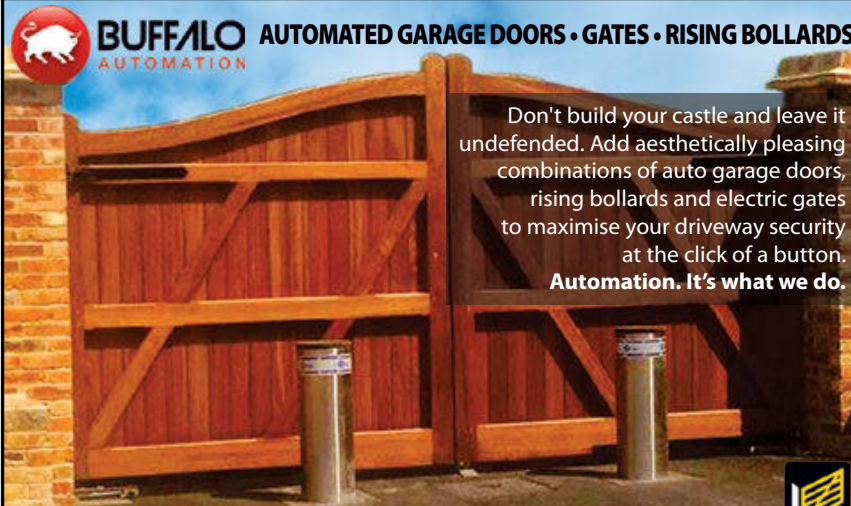
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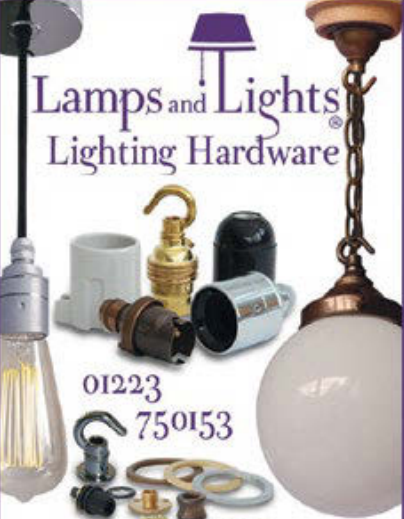
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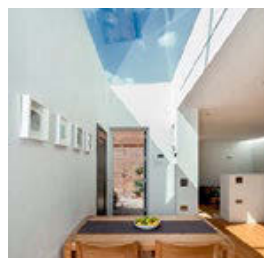
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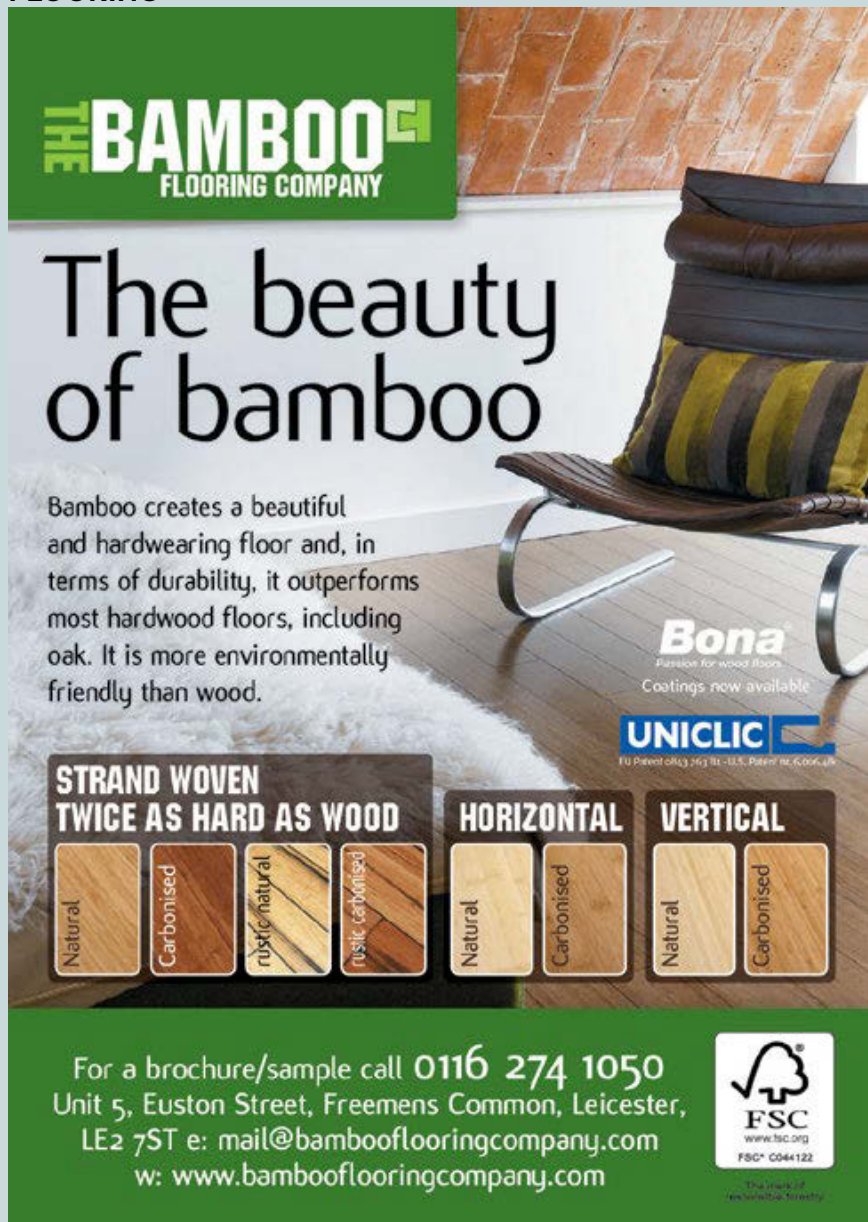


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HB&R Editor Jason Orme and his wife Sarah self-built their Georgian-style home in Worcestershire with the help of package company Design & Materials. Here, Jason explains how they did it



“We Ended up with a Home that Helped us Boost our Way up the Ladder”

WHAT MADE YOU OPT FOR A PACKAGE SUPPLIER?

We used package company Design & Materials for the project to weathertight stage. I felt it was worth buying in some expertise as it was our first major project and I wanted to ensure the design could be built for the budget we had. I felt, and still feel, that using package companies that supply both design work and materials/labour packages is the best way to ensure the two are in sync.

DID YOU HAVE ANY IDEA HOW THE FINISHED HOME WOULD LOOK WHEN YOU STARTED THE PROJECT?

We were restricted by two things — the Georgian market town surroundings and our budget. I knew that Georgian-style homes, with their simple shapes and roof styles, were relatively straightforward to build. The interiors came along as the build happened.

WHAT WAS YOUR FAVOURITE ROOM?

Our favourite room was the open plan living space, with the central fireplace, for sure. It was perfect for allowing our children to run around freely while always being able to see what part of the house they were destroying.

WERE THERE ANY CHALLENGES FACED ALONG THE WAY?

Budget was always the big worry. We had a few hairy moments on site but they were generally all related to money slowly ebbing away. On reflection there are many things we would do differently – not

installing a woodburning stove was a mistake – but on the whole we did what we did with the money we had, and we were proud of it.

WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR GREATEST ACHIEVEMENT?

In many ways it was getting the thing done in the first place. Thanks to the equity that self-building gives, we ended up with a home that helped us boost our way up the property ladder during a time when everyone else was losing money on the homes they had bought. Self-building provided us with a family home we could never have otherwise afforded and has now allowed us to move on to bigger and better things.

WHAT KEY THING DID YOU LEARN THAT YOU'LL APPLY TO PROJECTS YOU UNDERTAKE IN THE FUTURE?

Don't be afraid to ask questions and to take more control. As a young person undertaking a building project you tend to lack the confidence to challenge. I'd want to manage more of the project and ultimately be bolder in terms of the design.

IS THERE ANY ADVICE YOU'D PASS ON TO THOSE ALSO EMBARKING ON THEIR FIRST SELF-BUILD?

Invest in design and stick to it in the face of a largely cynical building industry. Self-builders are innovators and that is one of the hardest things to be when everyone else wants it easy. It is, of course, the reason we end up doing it in the first place. ■





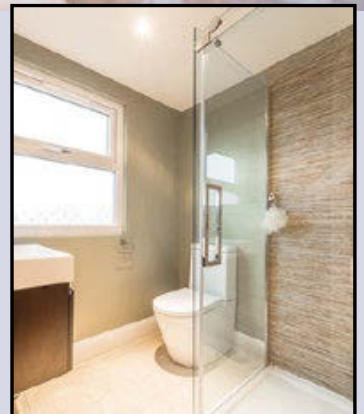
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